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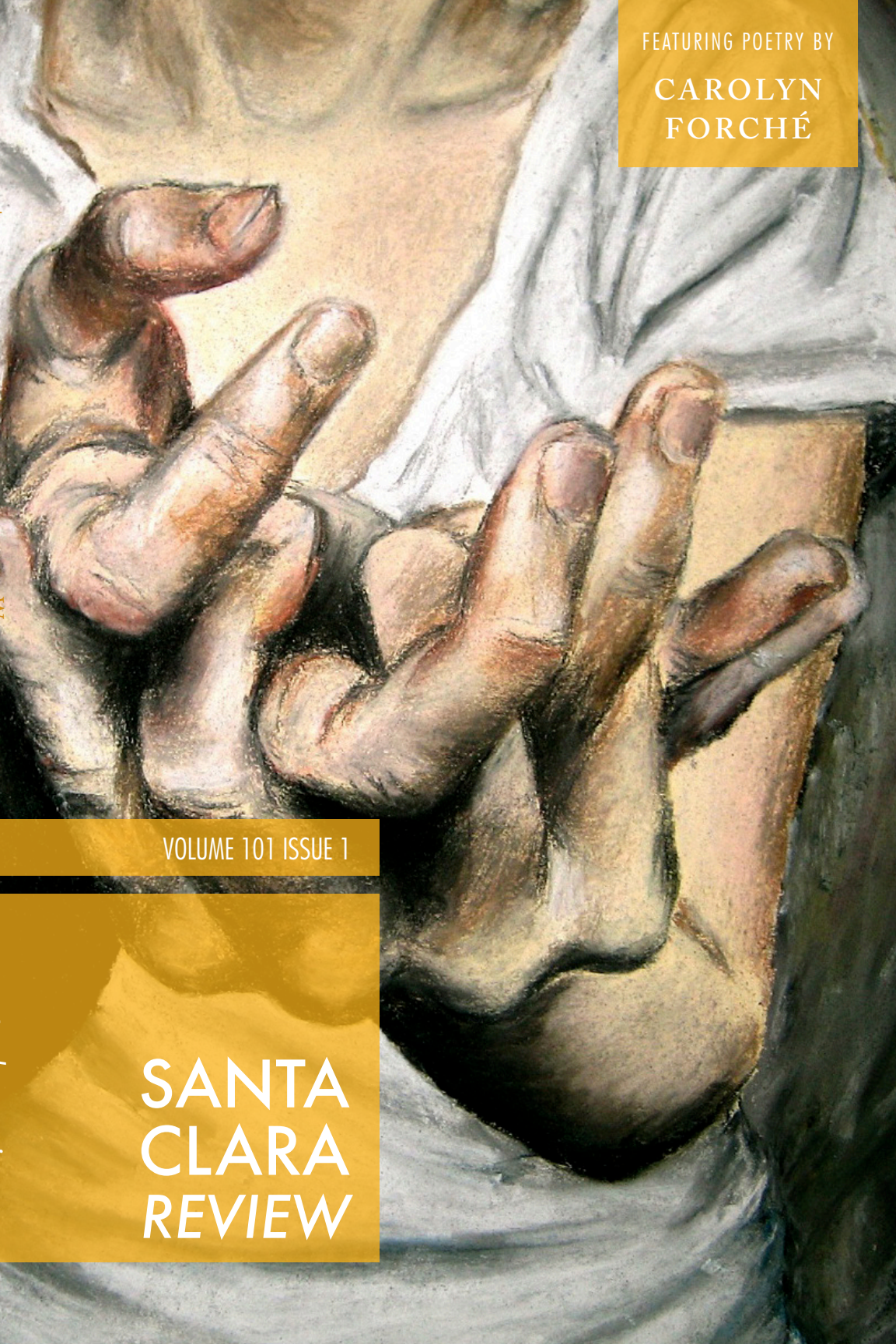

FEATURING POETRY BY

CAROLYN FORCHÉ

VOLUME 101 ISSUE 1

SANTA CLARA *REVIEW*

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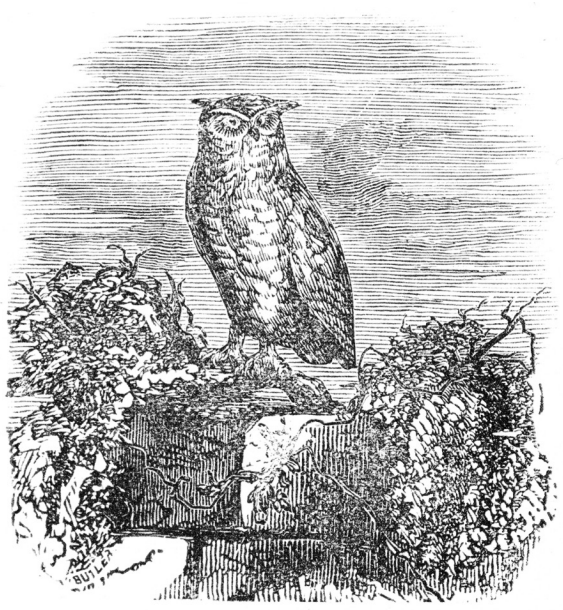

The cover of The Owl *(the previous title of Santa Clara University's literary magazine), for its second ever issue in 1870.*

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Cover art by Kate Lassalle-Klein

Hands, 2014

chalk pastel —14.5" by 11.5"

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EDITOR'S NOTE

To capture the complexity of human experience has long been a charge of writers, one often destined to wring either terror or success from their minds as they work. Fortunately, the human experience has the allure of being ultimately indefinable—that is, it belongs to no certain genre, format, or subject. Humanity can be captured through everything from Carolyn Forché's poetic witness to the intimate detail of the artist's brush. It can be found in the charming sneer of satire or the intricate personality of nonfiction. Wherever it is found, humanity is the element of connection in art and literature. It is the magnet that keeps us returning to what we realize is true, even if the details are spun from imaginative neurons in someone else's mind. In the creative work of others, we find the truths of our generation, and thus, the reality of our lives.

Perpetuating the truths of human experience has long been an idealistic vision of mine. *The Santa Clara Review*, however, has taught me that idealism has nothing to do with it. Humanity will speak and be heard, and reality will be recognized, no matter where its voice may rise. As part of the *Review*, I have welcomed the opportunity to read and experience the realities of our contributors as they are written to us; our staff has sifted through worlds of detail to discover those few works that speak true to our own hearts. The *Review* is always grateful for what chance it is given to contribute to the deepening realm of the artists' reality, the writers' thoughts, the poets'

observations. Each of these is a foundation of our society, and in an age of growing technology and ease of access, appreciation of the difficulty in creating fine work can be forgotten. The *Review* longs to perpetuate the beauty that exists within the search for understanding, the subconscious meeting of desire and diction that resonates when the mind meets the words of a sister soul in a published work. It is that meeting that drives us to connect with our audiences by way of humor, pain, joy, and strife. We have found resonance with each piece in this issue, whether painted or written, rhymed or prosaic, and we sincerely hope these pieces will be the connections you have been searching for to speak truth into your own life.

Remember that your truth may be spoken through someone else's words, and never give up the pursuit of knowledge that comes with being alive.

— Amy Thomas, Editor-in-Chief

THE LIGHT KEEPER

A night without ships. Foghorns calling into walled cloud, and you still alive, drawn to the light as if it were a fire kept by monks, darkness once crusted with stars, but now death-dark as you sail inward. Through wild gorse and sea-wrack, through heather and torn wool you ran, pulling me by the hand, so I might see this for once in my life: the spin and spin of light, the whirring of it, light in search of the lost, there since the era of fire, era of candles and hollow wick lamps, whale oil and solid wick, colza and lard, kerosene and carbide, the signal fires lighted on this perilous coast in the Tower of Hook. You say to me stay awake, be like the lens maker who died with his lungs full of glass, be the yew in blossom when bees swarm, be their amber cathedral and even the ghosts of Cistercians will be kind to you. In a certain light as after rain, in pearled clouds or the water beyond, seen or sensed water, sea or lake, you would stop still and gaze out for a long time. Also when fireflies opened and closed in the pines, and a star appeared, our only heaven. You taught me to live like this. That after death it would be as it was before we were born. Nothing to be afraid. Nothing but happiness as unbearable as the dreadfrom which it comes. Go toward the light always, be without ships.

— *Carolyn Forché*

THE MUSEUM OF STONES

These are your stones, assembled in matchbox and tin,
collected from roadside, culvert and viaduct,
battlefield, threshing floor, basilica, abattoir—
stones, loosened by tanks in the streets
from a city whose earliest map was drawn in ink on linen,
schoolyard stones in the hand of a corpse,
pebble from Baudelaire's oui,
stone of the mind within us
carried from one silence to another
stone of cromlech and cairn, schist and shale, horneblende,
agate, marble, millstones, ruins of choirs and shipyards,
chalk, marl, mudstone from temples and tombs,
stone from the silvery grass near the scaffold,
stone from the tunnel lined with bones,
lava of a city's entombment, stones
chipped from lighthouse, cell wall, scriptorium,
paving stones from the hands of those who rose against the army,
stones where the bells had fallen, where the bridges were blown,
those that had flown through windows, weighted petitions,
feldspar, rose quartz, blueschist, gneiss and chert,
fragments of an abbey at dusk, sandstone toe
of a Buddha mortared at Bamiyan,
stone from the hill of three crosses and a crypt,
from a chimney where storks cried like human children,
stones newly fallen from stars, a stillness of stones, a heart,
altar and boundary stone, marker and vessel, first cast, load and hail,
bridge stones and others to pave and shut up with,
stone apple, stone basil, beech, berry, stone brake,
concretion of the body, as blind as cold as deaf,
all earth a quarry, all life a labor, stone-faced, stone-drunk

with hope that this assemblage of rubble, taken together, would become
a shrine or holy place, an ossuary, immoveable and sacred
like the stone that marked the path of the sun as it entered the human dawn.

— *Carolyn Forché*

EXILE

The city of your childhood rises between steppe and sea, wheat and light,
white with the dust of cockleshells, stargazers, and bones of pipefish,
city of limestone soft enough to cut with a hatchet, where the sea
unfurls and acacias brought by Greeks on their ships
turn white in summer. So yes, you remember, this is the city you lost,
city of smugglers and violinists, chess-players and monkeys,
an opera house, a madhouse, a ghost church with wind for its choir
where two things were esteemed: literature and ships, poetry and the sea.
If it happened once, it happened in Odessa. If you return now,
it will not be as a being visible to others, and when you walk past,
it will not be as if a man had passed, but rather as if someone had
remembered something long forgotten and wondered why.
If you return, your father will be alive to prepare for you
his mint-cucumber soup or give you the little sweet called bird's milk,
and after hours of looking with him for his sandals lost near the sea,
you visit again together the amusement park where
your ancestors are buried, and then go home to the apartment house
built by German prisoners of war, to whom your father gave bread
which you remember surprised you. You take the tram to a stop
where it is no longer possible to get off, and he walks
with you until he vanishes, still holding in his own your invisible hand.

— *Carolyn Forché*

ASHES TO GUAZAPA

Your cinerary box was light, but filled with you it weighed eight pounds.
Nevertheless we each wanted our turn carrying you up the mountain.
We passed the roofless chapel, the crater, the graves of the youngest,
the camping place, the secret paths, the impossible stone road.
We came upon the shivering trees where the magical foreign doctor
was said to dig out bullets with a pen knife and supply the children
with iron by dipping rusty nails in water. We came upon the past,
where the holes were dug, and if you dug there now you'd fill quite a sack
with bones. We don't stop to dig there. We carried your box
to another place, not as far as we would have liked, but far enough,
where we all had our pictures taken with you, and then your box
posed with your former truck, that will now belong to the priest
you saved from prison. The truck seemed to know what had happened.
We spent a long time piling stones around the trees, even the mayor
who was once a fighter himself in these hills piled stones.
Then with cupped hands we tossed your remains into a coppice of cedars
You flew a little, your soft ash flew, settling on the stones under the trees.
A camouflage moth alighted on the tree where most of you fell, and there
your friend worked his machete until a cross appeared, and within it
a Christ of sap and grain. The moth then vanished into the jacaranda
and dragonflies arrived, hovering, then from nowhere butterflies
rained into the coppice, blue mariposas, as they sometimes do
into the roofless chapel, and as dragonflies whirred above us,
the camouflage moth held still with its wings open, and the mariposas
rose and fell until all was dust and wings—you in flight—leaving
a life without a day not given to others, leaving us, who stand
in your sunlit clearing of butterflies and ash.

— *Carolyn Forché*

THE JANITOR

As
if
to
be
in
the
light

swinging
a
mop

each
blue
tile
does
fit

the
scenery.

— *Danny P. Barbare*

Laura Bernstein-Machlay

ILLICIT

We pull up in separate cars to the strip mall just past seven in the evening, the air cold and fat with un-fallen sleet. Because this is Detroit in December, my tires skid on a patch of black ice and I wrench the wheel into the turn to stop the slide. Snow from yesterday's storm skulks in yellowing heaps at the edges of the parking lot—clearly somebody has plowed. If not for that and the cars scattered like dice across the lot, I'd swear we came to the wrong place. Mom's in the rusted Saturn behind me waving her arms in complex spirals and figure eights—she refuses to use the cell phone I bought her and has resorted to code which, unfortunately, I cannot translate. I motion over my shoulder, trying to reassure her with vague hand signals. This is a perfectly decent neighborhood, but I admit the shops look tattered and depressed, like they're closed not for the evening, but forever. A single lamppost diffuses dreary light in a halo that doesn't quite make it past the haze to the potholed asphalt. Add to this the fast food wrappers and empty cigarette packs coloring the ground like confetti, and the general aura of loneliness, and this could be any of the spots where my long-clean husband hooked up with dealers in his seedy youth.

▪ ▪ ▪

bud, tea party, cripple, funk, ganja, chillums, hemp, reefer, gunga, kif, mooka, Acapulco red, African black, Kentucky blue, boom, chronic, blunt, ashes, blanket, bo-bo, jolly green, broccoli, dry high, bambalacha, cheeba, jive stick, kick stick, crying weed, giggle weed, rasta weed, railroad weed, rainy day woman, skunk, spliff, shake, loaf, Meg, Pat, Mary Jane, mother, grass, sweet Lucy, dinky dow, white haired lady, 420, thirteen, thumb, toke, burn

▪ ▪ ▪

My eyes have worsened in the last year; without glasses my world is a soft Monet painting which I kind of like, but I'm an adult now so I'm wearing them. Still, I drive sloth-slow in the winter dark past the shuttered businesses as I compare addresses to the one circled in the *PhenomeNews*

on the seat beside me. Getting here has been a challenge from the start; convincing Mom was tough enough—which I can't help but find ironic. Then there's procurement. I first tried friends, but everyone's contacts had dried up or disappeared or died. I went the legal route, talking with my internist, gynecologist, gastroenterologist, ophthalmologist, and watching their faces go smooth and expressionless as eggs as they steer the conversation to Oxycontin or Celebrex. I left my husband out of it. Then I stopped at Starbucks for a consolation latte and spied an abandoned *PhenomeNews*, a free, local periodical thick with advertisements for psychics, bulk shea butter, raw bee pollen, practitioners of spiritual cleansings of all sorts, and lots of local green shops. Motherload.

▪ ▪ ▪

I first try marijuana at thirteen with my best friend Mari and her neighbor, Jim. This is also the first time I get blitzed on Mad Dog 20/20. We are outside, huddled together like puppies for warmth, for the sheer bliss of touching. We're at Mari's mother's house, but I doubt my mother knows this since she's out for the night with one of her revolving circle of boyfriends. I take a gulp of syrupy wine, hold the joint tenderly between thumb and forefinger. There's the burn at my lips, sweet smoke I swallow deep into my lungs like Jim taught me. Then I'm coughing until my ribs ache, my heart beating a staccato *thumpthumpthumpthump*. I spend much of the rest of the night on my knees, heaving in the shrubbery.

▪ ▪ ▪

According to the address, The Happy Place Clinic should be here, in the middle of the strip, though there's no signage confirming it. An awning above the door sags in the middle like a mustache. My headlights frame a sidewalk cracked in tic-tac-toes; I think the storefront window is papered over from the inside. Then the door opens and a man in a trench coat shuffles out, moving toward a car with bumper stickers reading *The Face is Familiar But I Can't Remember My Name* and *Your Honor Student Deals the Best Drugs*. We've arrived. A glance in my rearview shows Mom tailing so closely I fear her foot will slip on the accelerator and she'll ram my back bumper. I gesture at her and point to an empty space, then drive past it, leaving it for her with her bad hip. She ignores me and keeps driving, taking a spot farther away. *I love my mother*, I repeat to myself. *I love my mother*.

▪ ▪ ▪

Because I love my mother so much, I'm trying to get her stoned. Baked. Because I live in Michigan, it's now a legal right. In 2008 the good voters of my state passed Proposal One by a wide margin, making it legal for patients and their state-sanctioned caregivers to grow and possess small amounts of marijuana for medical purpose. Everyone can join the party, get a state-granted pot card; just obtain a prescription written by a licensed physician—if one can be secured who's willing to cooperate—and suffer from any of the sanctioned conditions ranging from cancer to nail patella, Alzheimer's to chronic pain. Mom's got two: severe degenerative arthritis in her hip, and Crohn's Disease, which makes it impossible for her to tolerate over-the-counter pain relievers. She's lived alone for years now and done just fine, but she's been hurting for too long. With hip surgery three months away, something's got to give.

▪ ▪ ▪

I don't use weed. I call it *weed* now, again until I'm fifteen, with Ivy this time—Ivy who over the years will dump me three times because of men before I finally let the friendship go. It's Saturday night and we're in my bedroom; Mom's on a date, or out with her friends looking for dates. Somewhere, Ivy has acquired the skill to roll joints, and I'm impressed and a little jealous at her finesse. She pulls the baggy from under her shirt and pours a small mound of green onto the Zig Zag paper, rolling it without fuss and sealing it by licking the edge with her bubble-gum tongue. *Voila*, she says, lighting the joint and taking the first hit before passing it to me; again there's the *thumpthumpthumpthumping* of my heart drilling a hole in my chest, static in my ears, the weight of someone's eyes at my back which, oddly, makes me feel lonelier. I stretch my neck like an ibis, look behind me, to the left and right and left again as I've been taught. Wall, wall, and wall. Who enjoys this? But Ivy is having a thumb war with herself, laughing.

▪ ▪ ▪

Inside The Happy Place, the crowded waiting room thrums with anticipation. With its rows of identical chairs, side tables fanned with magazines, and the clients quietly chatting, this could be any doctor's office anywhere. But something feels off, like one of those comic strips showing nearly identical scenes where it's your job to spot the differences—I think I'm in the wrong frame. The magazines have names like *High Times*, *Big Buds*, *Cannabis Culture*. The TV is too big, a flat-screen covering half a wall, and instead

of streaming MSNBC or Fox news, I recognize the black and white face of an agonized 1950s teenager, her mouth agape in a silent scream. I think I'm watching *Reefer Madness*—sans sound—a film I last saw in my junior high gymnasium along with a hundred other hooting adolescents. Mom points to the side of the room, at a skinny guy with dreadlocks and a soul patch. She whispers loudly in my ear, *He's so young. I bet he's got cancer*. She sits down heavily on the orange vinyl chair closest to the door. I pretend not to see her grimace in pain, go to the check-in window, and sign her name below others on a list.

A blonde, slightly overweight girl on the other side of the window looks up from her desk and asks in Russian-accented English, *You are being a patient or care provider*? She's wearing a lace-up, black leather bustier, her breasts squishing out the sides like bread dough. I tell her I'm here with my mother, we've come for the card. She nods, hands me a stack of forms. Her black-polished nails skim like beetles across the papers as she shows me where to have Mom sign. *You are welcome*, she says. *Your mother will soon be happy*. My mother is rarely happy, but I don't say this aloud.

▪ ▪ ▪

Psychology tells us all humans crave happiness, even as most of us are clueless how to achieve it. I guess I'm seeking my own when I follow in the path of Freud and try cocaine—*happy trails, teenager, dream, flake, love affair, candy cane, white lion, late night, Batman, hubba, beam, zip*—at seventeen in my high school bathroom with Lana, a half-Chinese girl I secretly believe too beautiful to be friends with me. I love Lana with all the passion a straight girl can; I will go on loving her a year later when she dumps me for a guitar player called Itchy who, in turn, will soon be dead of a heroin overdose. Lana sidles up to me in the mirror, paints wine red gloss across her lips, offers it to me. I apply, hand it back, the color garish against my skin. I love it. I look like a silent movie starlet, many of whom also indulged in coke in its legal days. Lana pulls a sandwich bag containing the dollop of white powder out of her tight, tight jeans pocket. *Look what I got as a tip last night*, she says. Lana works at a local cafeteria prepping salads behind the line. Who would tip her with drugs for arranging raw vegetables? But this is the '80s—these things happen.

We go into a stall and Lana sits on the toilet lid, pulls out her math book. She pours the powder into two crooked lines across *Calculus for Life* with its dancing blue and red derivatives and integrals. *Got a dollar?* I pull

one out of my tight, tight jeans pocket. *Roll it*, she says. I do. We take turns with the rolled bill stuck in our nostrils. We suck deep, the burn flies up our sinuses. I am light-headed, giddy with possibility even as I stumble into the side of the stall. I also feel guilty. I'm homesick for the first time in years and just want to huddle on the couch, watch *General Hospital* with Mom as we do on those rare afternoons we're both home. Lana finishes by rubbing the excess powder onto her gums with the tip of her index finger. I do the same—feeling the blessed numb.

▪ ▪ ▪

Mom fidgets while I read questions on the forms aloud.

Do you have chest pain? Tingling in your fingers and toes? Weakness in your legs? Difficulty breathing? Difficulty sleeping? Fears about the future?

Well, sometimes, she says in response to every question.

▪ ▪ ▪

Deb and I use poppers—*ram, rush, thrust, snappers, kix, TNT, liquid gold*—outside The Off Ramp with Johnny Jewel and his beautiful boyfriend David who have decided to take Deb and me under their angels' wings. A couple years have passed. I'm in college now and Mom is dating a guy named Barty; I like him but Mom doesn't feel the magic. I've also added a bit to my drug repertoire: speed once or twice to get through finals, an aborted experiment with mushrooms. I feel relatively experienced.

The Off Ramp is a serious gay bar. As part of the décor, the front half of a red car protrudes aggressively through the back wall. The patrons, all male but for Deb and me, wear spikes and biker gear—lots of leather coats, pants, and chaps that I've never seen before. Deb and I, already slightly stoned, sway a little on our feet as Souxie and the Banshees moan in the background. We look like heaps of old clothes in our mismatched Salvation Army wear and we're getting glares from the crowd. They don't look at us indulgently as do the patrons of Menjo's, that other gay bar where Deb and I sometimes go to dance. These guys mean business; they're here to hook up and we're in the way. *I don't like it here*, I say to Deb, who's watching a huge, bald man with an assortment of whips and chains dangling like prayer tassels from his belt. Another man towering to my left has the American flag tattooed across the back of his neck. I have to pee but there's no lady's room—*Hold it*, says Johnny.

He seems disappointed with our unusual reticence. We take our clove cigarettes and gin & tonics out the back door to the alley. *Dr. J's got the cure*

for you, he says, handing Deb and me small brown bottles. We watch David twist off the lid, put the bottle to his nostril, block the other one and inhale. I do the same and alkyl nitrites explode like firecrackers in the back of my head. I am dizzy—can't feel my feet on the asphalt.

Make it stop, I say in gasps to Johnny. *Make it stop*, I repeat a few seconds later. I'm crying now, mascara running into my teased, Aqua-Netted hair.

Sorry, pretty girl, he tells me. *You gotta ride it to the end. It'll go quick.*

No pain, no gain, says David while Deb giggles like summer rain somewhere in the distance.

▪ ▪ ▪

Mom and I wait as people of all ages arrive, disappear behind a yellow door. Mom speculates what's wrong with each of them, then dozes, her head dipping further toward her chest with each thick breath. She looks fragile in that moment and I find myself chewing on childhood terror before I make myself look away. At some point Bustier Girl comes into the room, and I see she's also wearing a short leather skirt and spike-heeled, thigh-high boots. I don't think it's a good look for her, but who am I to judge anyone else?

She goes to a VCR player hidden behind a plastic palm tree, removes one tape and replaces it with another. *Reefer Madness* vanishes and a documentary begins. A young man walks soundlessly onto a staged laboratory complete with test tubes and winding apparatuses lurking like snakes in the background. In his thick glasses and tweed sport coat, he's made an effort to look scholarly; however, his somewhat greasy hair spoils the effect, as do the stonewashed jeans he sports under the jacket. He points to a couple of luxuriant marijuana plants on the table beside him and begins speaking silently to the camera—another secret message I can't decipher.

Finally, a woman in a costume-store nurse's outfit, complete with perky hat and miniskirt, comes through the yellow door, calls my mom's name. She jerks awake with a shudder.

I was just resting my eyes, she tells me.

▪ ▪ ▪

It's a memory so old it shakes a little at the edges. It's late and I can't see very well in this room so heavy with patchouli incense. Adults surround me, enormous and threatening—for all I know they're my mom's friends. Everyone is sitting cross-legged on the ground—*Indian-style* they called it

at my nursery school—or lounging on enormous throw pillows my mother made on her sewing machine and uses in lieu of couches or chairs. Voices come in soft, disappointed murmur.

Shit, whispers a man, rubbing the palm of his hand on the orange carpet. Then louder, *This looks bad, folks*.

Everyone stares at black and white images on the television. I can't make sense of what I'm seeing: rows of words I can't read, endlessly long numbers, the solemn face of a news anchorman. I wend my way around the bodies to Mom huddled on a strange man's lap, tug on the bottom of her miniskirt. *What's happening?* I ask.

Nothing, Honey. Nixon's winning, that's all.

And this, hazed over in shades of blue—am I remembering true or did I add it later? Another man, massively mustached, crawls over on all fours, takes something out of his mouth and puts it in my mother's mouth. She shakes her head, gives it back. He crawls to another woman, puts it in her mouth. She sucks deep, her cheeks hollowing, blows smoke over my head in a long line that blends with the patchouli hovering near the ceiling.

Go to bed, Honey. Everything's okay.

▪ ▪ ▪

The doctor is ancient, shrunken to doll-size. His bald head, spotted like a mushroom, bobs in uncertain rhythms behind an enormous, empty desk. Mom and I sit across from him.

What can I do for you young ladies? he asks in a watery voice, as though there's any doubt what we've come for. Mom leaps into an explanation of her medical issues. As she speaks, she becomes more and more plaintive, her tone rising until she sounds like a young girl.

What did you say? interrupts the doctor. Mom starts to repeat her story, louder this time.

Sure you're not just looking for a little fun? This is a serious drug, you know, says the doctor even as he's pulling out a prescription pad and begins writing.

Mom's eyes widen. *I smoked some grass in the '70s, but I was young then—*

What? asks the doctor. Then, *What's your name again?*

My what? Mom asks in a louder voice. She can't hear very well either, but fears the indignity of hearing aids.

What was that? shouts the doctor.

I slowly spell out Mom's name. I am tired. I want to go home to my husband and daughter.

At a table by a side door we are given souvenir lighters and pens reading *Shake&Bake Dispensory* on the side in green cursive. Bustier Girl hands us a stack of papers in a manila envelope with instructions for how to mail them to the appropriate government office. *You will wait fourteen days. If you are rejected, you come back and we'll fix you*. She asks for the $150 payment in cash which neither Mom nor I have. It's past nine now and the clinic's closed. Bustier Girl checks with her boss, a youngish, dark-haired man in skinny jeans who also speaks with a Russian accent; he's adamant—no checks. I offer to come back the next day, but it's got to be Mom. She says forget it, she doesn't want to deal with the drive again.

Where do you live? asks the boss man. He points at Bustier Girl. *Marta will help you*.

▪ ▪ ▪

I am six, maybe seven. I search my mom's coat pockets looking for what I know I will find. I find it, go to the bathroom, hold the small paper bag upside down over the toilet and watch the dried bits of leaf and stem float on the surface of the water. I flush but it doesn't all go down, so I flush again, then once more to be sure.

The next day I am being watched by Lanie, my former stepfather's new wife. I tell her proudly what I've done.

Well hell, she says. *That was expensive stuff*. And I'm suddenly swallowing shame, dark and hot. My belly roils with it; I vow never again to hurt the mother I adore, a promise I will break over and over when I spend the night with boys and forget to call, when I take off by myself for Ireland, when I leave her behind again and again—as she did to me. I do, however, leave her pot alone.

▪ ▪ ▪

The following morning Mom and I huddle with steaming macchiatos at a corner table in Starbucks where we'd arranged to rendezvous with Marta—aka Bustier Girl. She arrives twenty minutes late, still in her leatherwear from the clinic and clearly exhausted. In the sunlight glaring through the windows, her skin looks thin and brittle as rice paper. She bypasses the coffee line and totters to our table, pulling the envelope out of a Macy's bag slung over her arm.

You have money? she asks. Mom slides the cash across the table, crisp new twenties and a ten. Marta counts it, drops it in her bag and gives Mom the envelope containing the pot-card paperwork while other customers lower their eyes and look away.

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In exactly fourteen days, Mom's request for a legal marijuana card is rejected by the state of Michigan due to a flaw in the paperwork, and in spite of my best efforts she refuses to return to The Happy Place clinic. Because I love my mother, I quietly track down one of my husband's old connections and do things the old-fashioned way; Mom surprises me, though, and opts instead to fill her prescription for Oxycontin—*cotton, kicker, ocs, hillbilly heroin, ox*. And I'm left chewing on futility, like some great something's been testing me in a language I can almost, but not quite, comprehend.

After Marta leaves us in Starbucks, I find myself wanting to come clean with Mom about flushing her stash all those years ago, about wanting, just once, to give her a gift she'd genuinely like. But we never talk about anything that really matters. We've never discussed the bulging baggies in her pockets so long ago, or why she's so uncomfortable revisiting that place now. We've never explored the moment she gave up once and for all her desire to be saved by some illusory prince and turned to me for consolation—though I fear I've done a piss-poor job of it. We've certainly never talked about my experiments with a handful of street drugs, which never once made me comfortable in my skin. These days I take legal drugs for that, available for a small co-pay from one of any fifty pharmacies in the ten-mile radius of my house.

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Now that marijuana is legal where I live, at least for medicinal purposes, I wonder if people will start using it without expectation beyond pain relief. I doubt it; people abuse prescription drugs as often as they do the illicit variety—for reasons that are none of my business. Who am I to judge when my past sometimes runs before my eyes like a silent movie, sans subtitles, and I'm left clueless at my own motivations? Why, for instance, did I use those illicit substances, and go on using them—if sporadically—throughout my twenties? Certainly I rarely enjoyed the experience. Unlike my husband, who will go on craving for the rest of his life, I don't miss illegal drugs any more than my mom apparently does. Unlike my husband, his childhood

so heavy with other people's expectations he needed help to walk, then fly, I never longed for freedom from the constraints of Earth. The bedrock of my world was tremulous enough.

Maybe it's as simple as this, for both Mom and me; maybe we were testing our limits as all young adults do, as when I once sat on a crumbling cliff's edge in County Clare, Ireland, dangling my legs over the side while the ocean crashed three hundred feet below, the diving gulls shrieking *jumpjumpjump*. Nowadays I know what I have to lose. I want solid ground beneath me; I dig in with my fingers and toes even as the Earth wobbles—warning of landslides to come.

ENDNOTES FOR "A POEM WITH MY OTHER NAME"

1. My girlfriend says she has to mow her lawn so she has to go home and I understand, as I have to do my laundry and it's important to me, too. I let these things pass as structures which need to be around and invisible to help us both.

2. She says, Who needs to be a *wife*, just because you're a *wife* doesn't mean that *prevents* anyone from having intercourse with somebody else, it just means you're a *wife*. It is not known if *wife* is capitalized in this context.

3. At the reading last night, I heard the man say, *The flower blooms by itself*. This confirms what was said above.

4. Conversations continue to bloom with enough fairness and the spice of good faith to make them light, never depressing.

5. A conversation when my girlfriend was in Jerusalem packing around waiting for her friend to arrive from the U.S.A. gave me the sense that she was all right being alone walking and waiting and was all right rooming with her talkative and sometimes imposing, annoying friend.

6. On first meeting, she said, having been asked to say something about herself, that she was *good-natured*. This proof continues. See above.

7. Coherence appears to happen luckily.

8. Being busy we don't see each other that much. That may mean being busy is key and that, all things being equal, still requires

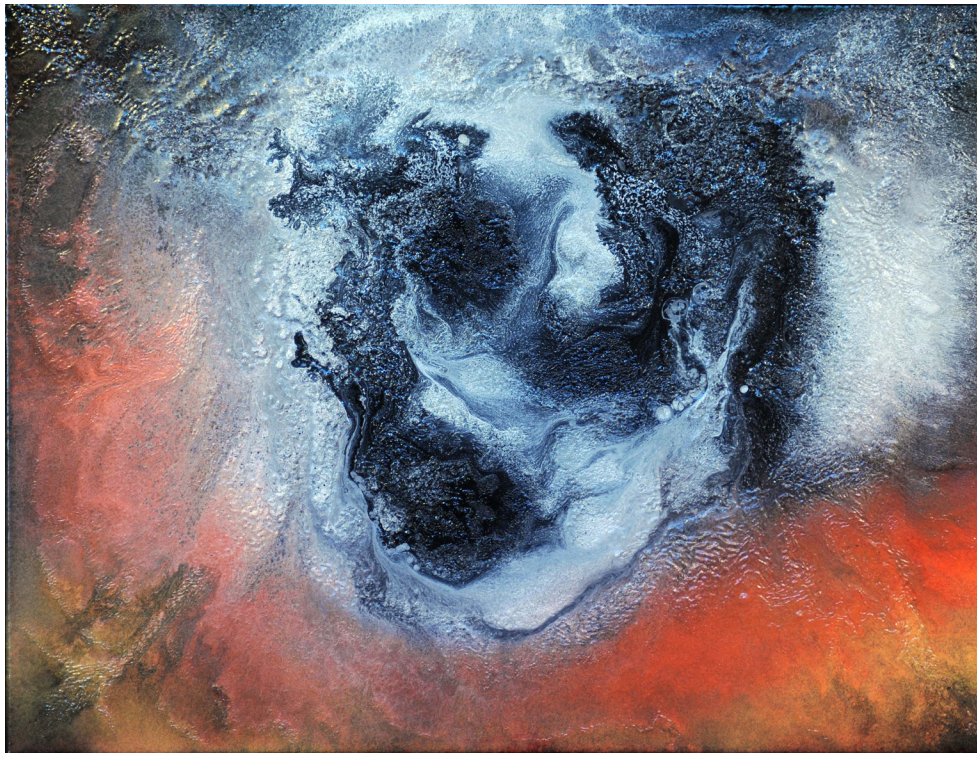
remembering important dates and events and listening a few percentage points better next time.

9. *All things being equal* doesn't make much sense in the context above or, for that matter, anywhere. It isn't known why it is used with such alacrity. It is smooth now owing to its broad use.

10. The word *wife* is of course a better word than the word *girlfriend*. Swifter, more elegant, useful as both a divisor and numerator.

11. After we met, after the beginning of the beginning or the beginning of the middle or near the middle of the middle, we began to talk about the meaning of many of the shorter words.

— *Alan Albert*



DISSOLUTION

Phil Bongiorno

spray paint and glue on canvas — 18” by 24”

AMERICAN GOTHIC

Blair Koeneman

Photoshop — 5” by 7”

SANGRE Y LUZ / BLOOD AND LIGHT

Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo

oil on canvas — 60” by 48”

EGGY

Sandra Proudman

digital photography — 9” by 13”

Max Evans

POPS' RIBS

Took me from a boy to a man
so I always had a father
when my biological didn't bother.
—CL Smooth

Leave it up to Pops to barbeque on the night of Mom's funeral. Before he sparked up the grill, friends and family had joined us at the Queen Mary to reminisce about Mom's life. Always the planner, she arranged her reception right down to the menu: an indulgence of lobster, scallops, and rib eye steaks. *Fill the fingerbowls with red and green M&Ms*, she included. *They remind me of Christmas*.

But my dad—fork untouched, tight suit biting his neck—wanted to go. I told him we'd leave after dessert and he said, "Take me to Costco. I want to buy ribs."

Blueberry crumble à la mode arrived at the table: mom's favorite. I undid my top button and asked him when the next grill session would be.

"Tonight," he said. "On the patio."

I swallowed. "Tonight!"

"Oh yeah."

"But Pops—"

"And potato salad, cornbread, greens…"

While Dad said his goodbyes to everyone in the dining hall, I turned to my small family. "Listen up," I explained.

"Jason, are you serious?" Marleen responded. "I—I just can't."

Alex stopped texting, jabbed his finger at his mouth.

"If that's what it takes," I said, "then do it. But we're eating those ribs tonight!"

After we left the Queen Mary, the chauffeur opened the limo door for Pops at the entrance to Costco.

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Inside his patio, my dad wore flip-flops and cargo shorts, the elastic strip of his underwear hidden by a tub of brown belly. The Terminators, his black sunglasses, looked our way. "Carolina rub," he announced, slapping a rack of baby backs. "Good stuff right here."

Pops' ribs were normally a treat. Before birthdays and summer get-togethers, he'd inject apple juice into the meat and marinate the ribs inside the mini-fridge. Days later he'd fork them hot off the grill and the flavor seeping down to the marrow would silence our entire backyard. Yet as he spilled barbeque sauce on the raw slab, drizzling a little honey, Marleen glanced away. His hands smothered the pink pork, and she winced every time his fingers squeezed—*splurt*—wet, gushy sounds—*splurt*—like a dying ketchup bottle. For all she cared, Dad could have been scrambling maggots inside the aluminum pan. I saw the sweat forming above her lips and realized, based on our drinking days before I had stumbled onto the train tracks, that her hair would need to be held soon.

The kitchen coffee beeped.

"Babe," I suggested, "Grab us two cups, yeah?"

She nodded, hurried across the grass, and if she was sick I couldn't hear, because Alex was texting rapid-fire—*tic-tic-tic*—burping up bits of lunch¬—*tic-tic-tic*—swallowing. Because he was coming off a weekend of water polo, I knew I could count on him to eat more if Marleen couldn't. Fortunately by the time she returned with two mugs, her color had returned. Meanwhile Pops had lit a pyramid of coals, hopping the flames with lighter fluid. He lumbered over the unswept floor, sciatica biting his ass with each step, and paused to kiss my wife's hair.

"Whatever you need," she said, "don't hesitate to ask."

"Ye-ah," my son said, distracted by YouTube. "What-ever-you-need."

Dad reached the mini-fridge and poured a large shot of Anejo. Like everything else he bought, the bottle was ridiculously oversized. He slapped the cork down with his palm and angled back the tequila. "Finally," he said, "I can relax now." He settled his three-hundred plus next to me and squeezed in a lime yanked from a bush. The dog licked his pulpy fingertips. "Oh hey, old girl!" Pops said. "Well, it's just you and me now, old girl."

"*Yes, daddy*," Pops replied in dog voice. "*Just you and me, daddy*."

I watched his brown hand rub her graying earflap. Even if I took vacation time and slapped on baby oil for months, my tan would never match Pops' skin tone, a deep caramel. While growing up, kids would ask me what it was like to have a black dad; I'd shrug my shoulders. I didn't know the difference between white dads versus black dads because my white dad was never in the picture. Mom married Pops when I was two, and as a youngster I'd slick my hair back with his steel pick hoping to look like Pat Riley. One time when I was in college, he gave me money for science books and while I deposited his check, he was over my shoulder asking what Mom wanted for her birthday. That's when an old security guard popped up. "Pardon me, young man," he said. "Is this guy bothering you?"

Pops sipped the tequila and let out a breath. Spun his wedding ring. Couple minutes later, another sip, and his Terminators scanned the area. The sky, damn near neon pink, held background to trimmed palm trees, the shaved crowns neat as crew cuts, prawns pointing upward. Shadows climbed their long trunks and by the time his shot glass was empty, the sun had slipped beneath the roof of my childhood home.

To get the show on the road, I checked the coals for Pops but when I saw him yawn, it gave me an idea. I poured him more and Marleen threw me a look.

He'll go to sleep, I mouthed.

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Well, that plan backfired.

After four shots, Pops stood up and had turned preachy on us: "When I die, don't nobody come to my funeral dressing all fancy…renting limos!"

"Alright Pops."

"Don't have any of that bullshit on my day. You hear me, Jason?"

"Got you, Pops."

"When I'm gone, I'm *gawn*!"

I sipped my coffee and looked at his puffed-out chest. His faded tattoo of Cupid from his time in the service was buried beneath white curly hair. We used to spend summers at the beach and he'd drop a knee in order to play dead. Head bowed, eyes shut, he'd say from the corner of his mouth, "Make a knuckle sandwich. Good, now smack this little guy *hard*. Right between the wings—hurry, hurry—save me back to life!" But at five years old, my punches would bounce off his pec, still he'd wrap his brown muscles around me after. "Oh my God, boy, thank you!" he'd say. "Thank you, thank

you, thank you!" We'd laugh in the sun and he'd tickle under my arm until, again, his body would slump over like an unplugged robot. "This time," he'd whisper, "keep your thumb out."

The last time we played that game, I was twelve. My fist shook because he had confiscated my Nintendo for an entire month. (Neighbors had complained to him, "Why are your avocadoes flying into my pool?") Blind with anger, I cocked my arm and let my hardest punch loose, but instead of hitting Cupid, I socked Pops beneath the ribcage—the tender part—and he crumpled to the sand.

I drank more coffee and yawned through his latest sermon.

"In my memory, throw a barbeque! Make mine a party. Music!—beer!—dancing! A jumper for the kids!"

He was loud enough to convert the neighborhood into his congregation, but he toned it down for Marleen. "And sweetie, tell the women to wear summer dresses, lotsa flowers." Then his voice boomed out, "My grass will be extra green, no stickers! Tell them to walk barefoot through Pops' garden!"

She reached across the chipped picnic table, squeezed his forearm.

"And you, Mr. Texter, when I meet my Maker, go find my old jazz records. They're in the garage back by that…near the…ahhh, they're in there somewhere. Give them a good dusting. And if you find your dad's hip hop stuff, throw it all in the trash." Pops deepened his voice to mimic the gangster rap from my stint as a deejay. "*Yo, bitch bitch bitch. I fuck a fuck a fuck*."

Alex and Marleen exchanged glances as Pops was in rare form. He cracked up to himself and wiped his sweaty forehead. All the while his Terminators surveyed the premises; I knew he was taking stock of his plastic chairs, determining what needed painting around the house, imagining where the cooler could be placed.

Then he slapped the table.

"Ooh, yeah! Tell you what I want, Jason. What I *really* want. After I kick the bucket, go down to that Samoan house on the corner."

"The Faumina's?"

"Yeah, tell those Fa-uh-whatevers to cut a deep hole in my favorite shade spot. Even the babies are giants so it shouldn't take them long."

The hammock beneath the avocado tree was sturdy. The thing could hold Pops, the dog and a transistor radio. My guess was he wanted roasted pig on his menu. That crunchy skin filled with fat is my favorite. "Lechon is the best," I said.

"No boy, listen. They're gonna put me in that hole!"

"C'mon, Pops," I said. "They can't bury you in the backyard. Rules and regulations."

He flubbered his lips. "Listen, listen. Your mom's casket, that plot she wanted, and today's meal, in all, cost damn near a Cadillac. I'm not complaining but just saying she got her wishes and I'm getting mine too. So your job is to pay them big motherfuckers to dig a hole under my tree… shove an apple in my mouth…and *rotisserie* my black ass."

He patted his round belly and I imagined strings of yellow fat stretched between curved bones. "That's just nasty."

"Bet you they taste good!" he said. "And think about it. After all the parties here, at the last one ever, I feed them with all I have—me—flesh of my flesh—that whole bit. West side Long Beach will feast that day!" He stroked the dog with his foot. "Jason don't know nothing, huh girl? *You're right, daddy. Jason don't know shit, daddy.*"

"Uh, it's called cannibalism."

"*Why's Jason being an asshole, Daddy? Why, Daddy, why?*"

Rather than argue with the drunken dog voice, I went to the pit.

"How they looking?" Pops said.

The nuggets were gray, perfect for grilling.

"Almost," I answered.

"Almost?"

"Couple more minutes."

And in a couple more minutes, Pops held onto Alex's thin shoulder for balance. "Boy-oh-boy, I grew up on *118th Street!* That's LA! What'chu know about that area, boy?"

"What's the add'y?" Alex said.

"The alley? It was the type of alley you don't go down at night."

"The address," Marleen clarified, and in seconds, Alex found a street view of the rundown house.

"Ain't that a bitch?" Pops said. "Who paints a house pink?"

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His chin rested on his chest, snoring away as if "watching" TV.

Before my dad passed out, he recalled a fight from the eighth grade and even though that scrap jumped off half a century ago, Pops swung his dukes beneath the patio light bulb, bobbing and weaving with the pull string, boys screaming around him. As the PE coach whistled to break it

up, a young Pops kicked the other kid a final time—*bang!*—while the old Pops hammered his leg against the picnic table. He fell to the bench, head pressed to forearms, and howled from his gut. His cries rushed flashbacks of Mom locking herself in the bathroom after their yelling matches.

"I miss her," he sobbed. "The bed…doesn't…feel right..."

Marleen rubbed his back and gave me the dirtiest evil-eye. She held that mean stare and I thanked God I could never read lips.

"This will go viral!" Alex said, reviewing the video from his phone.

"Erase it," I said, "or you're on technology vacation."

"Okay," he said. "But let me see that kick—*oh God*, that looks painful!"

"Now!"

"Alright, alright."

Marleen had grabbed bedding from the house. She layered blankets on the patio floor then looked toward the back fence. "You sure about him sleeping out here?"

I removed his sunglasses and stacked two pillows beneath his head. "Trust me, he loves to sleep with air. The dog will be here too."

Before they left, Alex offered to help lower Pops to the ground but I told him to go on home. "You need your rest for morning practice, and babe," I said to my wife, "call me after you drop him off. I'll scramble eggs with these ribs."

"Wow," she said. "He needs ice."

My dad's shin had bubbled like fried bologna.

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The key to barbequing, he taught me, is to slow burn with indirect fire—the fat melts into the meat—and to survey the pit for flare-ups with a beer in hand.

Staying true to his recipe, I finished my last cup of coffee on the patio floor and pressed a Heineken against his shin. The green bottle fit perfectly in my palm. My thumb swiped the wet label and the trademark red star brought back good memories: bonfires, bachelor parties, hotel Jacuzzis.

I caught myself wishing the cap was a twist off but then I remembered my fall into the Metrolink. Two years ago, colleagues were buying me birthday drinks and the next thing I knew, strangers at the Blue Line were yelling down at me to get up, come on mister, get up now, their arms stretched my way. My face leaked blood as two young guys with big headphones lifted me onto the platform. An engine crunched my messenger bag and I hailed

a long cab ride home, the driver glancing in the rearview as I pressed my tie to my cheekbone. I arrived home late and Marleen screamed at me with that high pitch I hate, "This is your last relapse with me and Alex around. If this happens again, you're signing papers!" The next day at work, my face was scraped and I heard giggling behind cubicle walls as I walked toward the manager's office. When he asked about my issued laptop, I claimed two young guys with big headphones had robbed me near Florence Avenue.

While sitting in my tank top and boxers on the cool patio floor, with Pops knocked out and my family at home, reality hit me—Mom *died*. No more homemade lasagna on New Year's Day, no more sound advice when I needed it. During the days leading to her funeral, I had concentrated on following her directions to a T so that her reception would come out "flawless," as she preferred to say, but at that moment the pain sank inside my chest, gray and swollen.

One look at Pops and I had to let it all out.

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After I cried, I was able to breathe again. Yet my sight roved to the mini-fridge. I sucked in my lower lip, contemplating that bottle.

You downed too much coffee, my brain blathered. *It's summertime, no one's around. Skip the tequila and just have this beer because you only want to taste it. And as sticky as you are, a sip won't hurt.*

That morning, my sponsor had texted his condolences. He reminded me I could call him at any time, for any reason. The ribs would be done in less than twenty minutes and my plan was to give him a ring and tell him how stupid, stupid, stupid I'd been for grabbing a beer instead of frozen veggies for Pops' leg.

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The ribs burned.

And my ass couldn't be happier.

Sitting on the bench where as a teenager I had snuck liquor for the first time, I was officially deliciously drunk off Pops' beer. After downing Heineken after Heineken, I felt no pressure in my life whatsoever as I peed behind the patio. The light shining through the slats striped the wooden fence, and my swaying stream under the avocado tree spotted mud on the trunk while I gazed up through its leaves to a deep purple sky and watched clouds, orange like flashlights through fingertips, drift over the nearby oil refineries. Cocooned within that comfortable moment, drunk with a blad-

der flowing everlastingly, my respiration felt deep, pure. A couple blocks over on the 710, an eighteen-wheeler downshifted, the exhaust sounding like the city had yawned.

I returned to Pops in the patio. Before he woke up in the morning, I'd make a quick 7/11 run to replace the twelve-pack inside the kitchen refrigerator and by the time Marleen would arrive for breakfast, the neighbor's recycling bin would hide my empties. As for the ribs…I'd say my eyes had refused to stay open.

Trying to wake my dad proved impossible. I tugged off the light and straddled the bench in the dark. My arms hooked under his shoulders and while lowering him to the floor, I couldn't believe his mass even when his knees touched down. Yet the damned dog was right in front of him, hopping like a pup.

"Back up!" I yelled.

My arms tightened and I told her to get, but she kept barking. Around his wide trunk, I tried to kick her away but she thought it was a game and only moved closer, licking Pops' stubble. Blood rushed to my face and my fingers hurt.

"Bitch, move!" I screamed, and tried once more to kick her but I slipped on the blankets. My dad's head lolled forward and to halt his momentum, I had to stop with a jerk—*pop*—and snapped my back up. He slipped through my hands and before he hit the ground, his thick body twisted sideways, missing the pillows, and the cement caught his head with a solid thump. The dog yelped out of the patio.

I fell to Pops' side, gritting my teeth. I squeezed a mismatch of comforters and blankets while the pain ground into my lower back like a tenacious screw, spinning through spine material, fastening my abdomen to the ground. I squirmed endlessly and there was no catching my breath. When my eyes adjusted to the dark, I noticed blood coursing through Pops' eyebrow.

"You alright?" I said.

His gut remained still and my hand didn't feel any breath coming out. I pawed him closer and nearly vomited from the agony of that screw winding deeper. I propped myself on one elbow and tilted his head back, pinching his nostrils. The tequila on my father's lips tingled my own but before I could exhale, he coughed hard and phlegm landed on my tongue. I spat at

the grass, nearly hitting the dog, yet I was relieved to hear my dad snore again.

"Come here, girl," I said, and she hobbled with her back paw lifted. I inspected the crooked limb. Her whimper turned to growls. "Right here then," I muttered, and pointed to Pops' head. She lapped the area clean and gave him one last lick before limping toward his feet. With her snout, she lifted the bedding and burrowed underneath.

My legs heavy as planks, I slid across the floor to the mini-fridge. I kept the door open with a hot sauce bottle and the dim lightbulb was enough to see the bump rising on Pops' temple. I returned to him by the force of my forearms and slipped the cold tequila bottle inside my pillowcase.

Past the grass, light shined down on the driveway from the kitchen window. My keys and phone were on the counter next to the coffeemaker. Even if I had dragged myself over the lawn to the house, climbing the back steps would have been impossible. But I had to try.

I removed the bottle from his warm knot and downed large gulps to numb my back. I moved away from him and the dog, and I tried to lift myself by the table's edge but the legs teetered and everything crashed. Barbeque sauce flew, bottles broke. I tried to scream for help but the effort sped the throb in my back.

I returned to my uncovered pillow and Pops' bump had engorged to the size of a jawbreaker. My last conversation with Mom had centered on him, how he'd need me to come around the house more often. I guzzled the tequila and replaced the bottle to his forehead, deciding then and there to stay awake until morning.

Lying there at my dad's side, flat on my back, I saw an airplane with blue lights blink across the sky. The dog was cleaning Pops' shin once more and her snout poked through the covers. She licked my toes.

"See," I told her, "I'm no asshole."

More swigs down the hatch and the ache in my back softened. The dog continued to lick my feet and I spotted another plane with red lights inch past the half moon. The throbs in my spine spaced out at longer intervals, and suddenly maintaining the bottle against his head required more mental energy than I had.

I told myself, "Can't go to sleep." No sooner had I said that, I yawned. "Nope. Gotta stay awake."

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How much time had passed after I fell asleep, I wasn't sure, but the brightened atmosphere woke me into a panic. My eyes squinted from the daybreak; I heard cars driving on the street and the trash truck clanking down the alley. The patio was in a shambles—flipped table, floor splotched with sauce, charcoaled ribs and glass. My hand splatted water since the mini-fridge had defrosted over the night. The puddle reached the bottle at my side, standing tall like a guardian, and a sliver of tequila remained at the bottom. My vision tripled the cork.

While twisting toward Pops, I feared three gray faces would stare at me. Instead, my pillowcase covered his face. He wasn't snoring and when I shook his hip, nothing happened. I began pinching his arm, his wrist, his bicep, but my wet hand couldn't tell if his body was warm or cold.

"Pops?" I said. I struggled to sit up. "Pops!"

I stared at the pillowcase, blinking, fearing. Slowly, I peeled back the cotton but stopped beneath his eyes. I leaned down and clapped his cheek, hoping to see a twitch, a movement, but I was so out of sorts I didn't know whose air was brushing my hand. Of the three Pops in my vision, I slapped the middle one.

The dog emerged from the blankets, growled.

I screamed, "Shut up, you stupid!" but my slurry voice sounded like a stranger.

Small birds were chirping from the telephone wire. I looked at them lined up in a row, as if clocking in for another day of work, and I remembered my slip at the train station, the people screaming down at me from the ledge, the panic I felt when the automated voice repeated, "Train approaching…please step back from the yellow zone. Train approaching… please step back."

I stung Pops with a harder slap and the dog snapped her jaws. I imagined Mom on high tsk-ing her disappointment and pictured the stares I'd receive at his viewing. I planted my ear over his blurry Cupid but didn't hear any beating.

At that moment, thinking I'd killed my Dad, everything slowed down.

"Don't do this to me!" I screamed, but each syllable came out extended like dropping the BPM on a love song, transforming the most diva singer into a crooning monster.

My Adam's apple tightened, my heart rate choked my jugular. Tears multiplied his stubbly face and I began to pull his chest hair—still, no

response. I yanked entire tufts from Cupid faster than I had shoveled sand on Pops' body at the beach.

"Please wake up!"

I cocked my elbow back.

"Don't—leave—me!"

My fist shook.

My thumb slid out my hand.

Sarah McClammy

THE MORRÍGAN

In my old age, I fly through open windows under cover of night to peck up pouches of euros to pay for my food, my clothes, my rent. This act, like all else, is beneath me.

I should feed on the blood of warriors but my race of warriors has gone. Now I feed on the human delicacies: vindaloo, sausage rolls, lamb stew. Last Monday in a shaming act of serfdom, I gave a styrofoam container of curry to the girl who stands on the corner of Oliver Plunkett and Princes. She subsists on apples bartered from the market. Like me, she does not feed as she is built to feed. I pity the child. She told me as I proffered the curry in a creased pale hand that she is called Vegan. I do not care for your name, child, for I did not tell you mine.

I arrived here last year. Here: a city stained with people who die but whose deaths are not worthy of me. I did not bother myself with them, and they confused me for a saint. Children ran at my feet throwing flower petals. They smiled and said, Mother, Mother. I am not your mother, child; I am the carrion crow of war. When your dead lie upon a field, I collect their heads as trophies—my acorn crop. The people of the new city lost interest soon enough. I was already an old lady when I arrived, my black hair streaked with grey, the wrinkles pulling the corners of eyes and mouth into angry cobwebs.

I had left the last city after a night in a 24-hour café. I had watched the staff change, watched the customers come and go. Everyone appeared tired, and the biodegradable cups of coffee did little to help. I realized as I sat under the neon glow of wasted words, as I sipped black coffee and nursed black thoughts, that I could not find nutrients in the city because its people could not find any. Gone were the people who would kill and maim in defense of country—beloved country—proud Ireland. I departed for the rebel country on the midnight coach, foolish in my hope that warriors awaited my arrival.

I once flew above fields black and oily with war. People built me shrines of brine and blood, a raven's feather, a red cloth. In my youth, death arrived on the point of a sword: beautiful and crimson.

Quinn Ramsay

THREE WOMEN I WISH I'D MET IN EDINBURGH, AND A FOURTH THAT I ACTUALLY DID

In my dreams, her name is Elsa, and she is beautiful. Her hair is bushy and dark like her eyes. They are the kind of eyes that seem to go on for miles, and I'm afraid that if I stare at them too long, I'll fall in, plummeting like Alice down the rabbit hole. My imagination is a bit of a drama queen. Elsa is Austrian, I think, but my imagination never filled in those details. It is far more interested in the way she wraps her arms around herself for warmth, despite her beige peacoat and thick woolen scarf, and the way she pronounces 'hi' with two syllables: "Hi-iy."

We would meet at the Christmas fair on Princes Street, packed in by crowds of thickly-bundled revelers. All the young women in Edinburgh are there, it seems; predatory young women who travel in packs, laughing loudly and trying on woven panda hats. Lights flash all around us. They flash from the towering carousel, and from the Walter Scott monument. They flash from the crowded vendors' carts.

Like me, Elsa wouldn't have a pack to join. Like me, she had friends here, but they left, dragging their luggage down the ramp into Waverley Station. Like me, she only has one day left in Edinburgh. She'll be deep in thought, and when she sits down beside me on the bench and puts her back to the clamor of the festival, she probably won't even notice that I'm sitting there, wolfing down a syrupy marshmallow crêpe.

When she sees me, she politely asks if I'm from around here. I probably won't answer at first because my mouth is full of crêpe. She frowns, and looks as if she's going to get up. I panic. My mouth is still full.

"Herro. Mr nmm rs Qrnn," I say suddenly. "Mm Frmm Armrruca."

In my dreams, she appreciates the humor of the situation and grins. I grin back, wondering if I have marshmallow on my teeth. The eyes are pulling me in.

"Hi-iy," she says. She holds out her hand, and I shake it.

When my throat is clear, I ask if she would like to get some mulled wine. The cart is just behind us, and she looks as though she could use something warm.

As it actually happens, of course, there is no Elsa. I wander through the crowded stalls of the Christmas market, amid German chocolate and beer and Belgian waffles and wooden tchotchkes and rows and rows of sausages. There are couples and trios and troupes, young and tripping on caffeine and beer, but I am alone in being alone. At a carnival, people by themselves may as well be invisible.

Soon the fair closes, and the crowds disperse like fog and last orders are called at the mulled wine tent. I buy some, enjoying the heat on my slowly thawing lips.

I stay on a little while at the bench and look out over the gardens at the spires and turrets of the oldest buildings in the city. I see the brooding hulk of Edinburgh Castle, bathed in blue light. On our first night in the city, Nate and I had run all the way there. The wind was so strong that we didn't even tire; we just opened our coats with the wind at our backs and sailed. By now, Nate could be halfway back to school. I had decided to stay an extra day, thinking that I would have an adventure, maybe even a romance, but now I wished that my friend were back. Without his boundless confidence and ear-to-ear grin, sociability was proving harder than it looked.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" says a middle-aged man beside me. I start. I hadn't even noticed him sit down.

"Uh…" I say. "Yeah."

The man grins. "Ah," he says. "Not from around here, are yeh?"

I shake my head and extend my hand. "My name is Quinn. I'm from America." He takes it, a strong handshake, and I see a blue leash dangling from his wrist. I look down to see a little dog—a corgi, I think—staring up at me with unbridled affection. I feel that I haven't earned it.

When I leave the park and begin to walk farther and farther down Princes Street, the carnival lights fade away and everything becomes dark and quiet. Trendy boutiques turn to brooding Presbyterian Kirks; restaurants become 24-hour chip shops; bright hotels with red awnings become

frowning concrete tenements. It is the first time I have walked the road back to the hotel alone, and it seems like every step I make grates on the pavement. But the city is asleep and I don't wake it. By the time I am near the hotel, I am drowsy, and my mind begins to wander. I begin to dream again, of Maryanne.

Of course, she introduces herself as Mary. She was named after her grandmothers—Mary is the nice one, she tells me, but Anne was a sodding witch. She has splendorous red hair, tangled and curly, that cascades over her shoulders. To use any other verb would be to do it an injustice. She is a student from Glasgow or Aberdeen, with a husky, warm, and cheerful brogue. To use any other noun would be to do it an injustice.

When I arrive back at the hotel, footsore and freezing, I take a seat at the bar, wondering if it would be unseemly to order a hot chocolate. She is sitting one stool over, halfway through a pint of Guinness and chatting animatedly with the woman behind the counter.

She introduces herself, and when I tell her my name, she claps me suddenly on the back. "Good Scottish name!" she says. "Wear it proud." When the barmaid asks me what I want to drink, I order a Guinness without hesitation.

Mary likes to talk. She tells me all about the moody northern coast and the myriad problems of having red hair and the worst hangover she ever had. She laughs at her own jokes, just like me, but when she does it, I think it's cute. She wears a sky-blue blouse with the top two buttons undone. As she talks, I can't help but notice the freckled smoothness of her skin, the gentle curve of her collarbone.

"You like football?" she asks, jerking her head toward the glowing television. Her curls flare out like fiery Slinkys. I hope she hadn't noticed me staring.

"Only on this side of the Atlantic," I say. In my dreams, she seems to find that very clever.

"Love it myself," she says. She finishes her Guinness and orders a glass of whiskey.

"Can't beat Famous Grouse," I'd say, reading the label on the wall and hoping I'd read it correctly.

"Oh yes." She smiles and puts the glass to her lips. She drinks her whisky straight, and I want to marry her on the spot.

When I arrive at the bar, Mary isn't there. I order my Guinness and wait around for a bit. Two girls my age, both Americans, are sitting at the other end of the bar, talking with the barmaid about home. They are easterners—from Massachusetts—just as foreign to me as any Brit, but listening to their conversation makes me think of Oregon, my home. I find myself missing close friends, family. More than anything, strangely, I miss the tall forests of the Northwest. I see so few trees in Scotland, just craggy green hills and sprawling fields, and I can't help but think of the familiar Douglas Fir, and the Ponderosa Pine with its puzzle-piece bark, and all the other native plants whose names I memorized by rote in middle school and then promptly forgot.

It is the twenty-seventh of November. In less than a month, I fly back to the States. For all that I miss home, I know that I am far from ready to leave.

When I finish my Guinness, the two American girls have left. I slide a ten-pound note onto the counter, and the woman behind the counter takes it. I want to tell her that I'm American, too; I want her to know what it means to me to be here. She hands me my change.

"There you go, love," she says.

I thank her, suddenly feeling very, very sleepy.

I check out the next morning, eating my last Scottish breakfast in a café owned by a nice Turkish couple. It rains hard through most of the day, heavy rain that plasters my hair and soaks my luggage as I walk back down Princes Street, past the Scott Monument and the carnival rides, dark and lifeless in the light of day. When I finally walk dripping through the doors of the National Museum of Scotland, an employee takes one look at me and bursts out laughing. I grin sheepishly as she hands me a map and points out the way to the bathroom, where I run my hair under the hand dryers and then drop off my sodden luggage at the bag check.

I spend hours there, staring at the Lewis Chessmen and the Pembridge Helm and the stuffed wildlife. My imagination is as tired as I am, but I still dream.

In my dreams, she is a graduate student studying matriarchy and sexuality in Bronze Age Britain. Let's call her Joan. She has that sharp sort of beauty that one sees inside museums, all ruby red lipstick and thick-rimmed glasses, with her thunderstorm of black hair cropped just above her shoul-

ders. She would be taller than I, and a little older—just not enough to be weird—and would exude all the chin-jutting confidence of a woman who understands romance to be a peripheral concern. But I would see beyond that, to the way she only lifts one corner of her mouth when she smiles, or the way that her eyes dart all over as she wanders down the aisles, as if hoping to catch the eyes of passersby in her own.

I'm not sure what she would say to me when we met. I want to know so badly. But she is always just a few steps ahead, blocked from view by the stuffed rhinoceros, or a floor above me in the world art exhibit. Around every corner, I keep imagining that I hear the click of heels on the tile, but every time I turn she isn't there.

I begin to wonder if I am doing something wrong.

I eat dinner that night at a pub called The World's End, savoring my last Haggis and my last Scottish beer and wondering what Nate would say if he were here. He'd grin his inhumanly large grin and say, "Go hard or go home," or something like that. It feels strange to eat in a restaurant by myself, and while I wait for my meal, I read from a book I'd bought at the museum, a biography of King David I of Scotland. It doesn't feel right to leave like this, without incident, love, or adventure.

I arrive early at Waverley Station, and settle down to read more from my book. An old woman in a heavy jacket is sitting on the bench next to me, reading from a book of her own. It has the look of a paperback mass-market romance, and I want to judge her for it.

"Headed home?" she asks me, putting the book down on her lap.

"Sort of," I say. "Going back to school. In York."

The woman raises an eyebrow at my accent. "One of the American cousins, are you then? Which state?"

"Oregon," I tell her, and she looks confused. "It's just north of California."

"Oh, that's nice." She says. "Is it very warm?"

"Hardly ever," I say. "It's pretty rainy, like here. But a lot more trees."

"Oh dear…" The old woman chuckles softly, removing her reading glasses and putting them in her purse. "How did you like it here, then?"

I actually I ponder it for a moment. Strangely, I don't think about the dreams, about Elsa, or the empty bench at the Christmas fair. I think instead of the bright lights and dark silhouettes of Edinburgh at night, of an

evening sailing up the old streets to the castle courtyard. I don't think of Mary, but of the view from Carlton Hill, watching the city lights strike up against steep and craggy hillsides like waves. Instead of Joan, I remember St. Giles Cathedral, and how the centuries-old arches stand out against the immaculate sky-blue paint of the ceiling. I think of the way the rain feels running through your hair when you have nowhere else to be and can't be any wetter than you already are.

"It was really nice," I say.

DOLLFACE

Because rain. Because my ankles
doubt your palm, my knees.
Because your eyes,

impenetrable. Because her because she—
Because rain and rain and
sleet. Because back roads

and backseats and the foggy haze
of tilled up fields once surrendered.
Because too long lonely

to be lonelier together. Because why?
Because you made breakfast,
said, *Don't get used to this, Doll.*

— *Jennifer Raha*

Janice Westerling

LOOKING FOR ROY ROGERS

In a town so small that it didn't have a cinema, I went looking for Roy Rogers. Perched on the edge of the passenger seat, focused on my quest, I wore an imitation-suede cowgirl's vest trimmed in white plastic fringe, a gift from my seventh birthday. The squat storefronts on Main Street rolled by my window and on every corner we passed a church: the stolid, redbrick Baptist, the lofty spires of the Lutheran, the whitewashed Mennonite. Six blocks and no stoplights later, the road narrowed to two lanes bordered by vineyards. Up ahead the muddy Kings River washed along shallow banks.

That morning our screen door slammed shut right on schedule, and Dad hung his straw hat on the back porch hook before walking into the kitchen. This Saturday, he brought home extraordinary news from the drugstore soda fountain.

"Yep, he was all the talk over coffee," I heard him tell Mom. "Can you beat that? A Hollywood movie star in our little town."

"But what is Roy Rogers doing in Kingsburg?" she asked.

"Roy Rogers!" I shouted, rushing into the kitchen.

The Roy Rogers Show had made the short list of programs sanctioned by my parents, who allowed me to watch two hours of television a week. Every Saturday morning, with our living room shades drawn against the blunt valley sun, I spent thirty minutes of my precious viewing allotment sitting cross-legged in front of our black-and-white Philco watching my favorite cowboy.

On weekdays I carried my metal Roy Rogers lunchbox, with a picture of the King of the Cowboys astride his horse, Trigger, on its lid, to second grade. Roy had competed with Gene Autry for my buying power (Dale Evans wasn't even in the running), but I had chosen Roy Rogers because he was a faithful Christian. Like the heroes in my Bible stories, he always triumphed in the end.

"Where is he? I have to meet him! Please!"

"Now hold on a minute, pal," Dad said. "Roy Rogers didn't come to town to sign autographs. He's competing in a shooting contest down at the Gun Club."

When I heard his locale, my hopes sank. Restricted to members only, the Gun Club was for men with extra time and money, like the ruddy-faced Lions who manned barbecue booths on the Fourth of July. My father was a member of only one organization, the First Baptist Church, where he sang bass in the choir, served as a deacon, and pitched horseshoes at the Sunday school picnic.

"We're not gonna chase around town looking for Roy Rogers," Dad said, and the subject was closed.

I had given up any hope of meeting my hero when I saw a car speeding too fast down our dirt drive, kicking up dust that would settle on the grapevines and smother their tender leaves.

"It's Judy!" I yelled, anticipating the attention she always showered on me.

Judy was my mother's cousin, a spinster schoolmarm with a straight spine and buckteeth, who had taught me to press wildflowers between the pages of a dictionary and to mix primary colors of yellow and blue to make green. She had strong opinions, like a man, and didn't hesitate to broadcast them. She had vowed as a girl never to smoke a cigarette or taste a drop of liquor and often reminded me she had kept her promise. Well, drinking alcohol was a sin; everyone knew that. At church, the wine of Holy Communion, symbolizing the blood of Christ, was really Welch's grape juice.

When she visited, Dad usually retreated to his workshop in the garage.

"Judy," my father replied in a calm voice after she explained her plan and the reason for her visit, "you know the Gun Club is a private affair. They're not going to let you and Janice stroll through the gate to meet a movie star."

Judy mowed right over Dad's objections—one reason he liked to avoid her. Now, as her car crested the bridge, I could see the Kings River had begun to swell with spring snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada.

"Stop bouncing on your seat, Janice," she commanded. "I can hardly keep my hands on the wheel."

As we neared the Club, I heard a scattering of pops like muffled fireworks. The scent of gunpowder hung in the May air, smoky and acrid. Somehow, in all the excitement, I'd forgotten we were going to a shooting

competition. I suddenly recalled the blast of my father's rifle in the orchard behind our house and the soft body of a sparrow dropping to the ground like overripe fruit.

Swallowing hard, I asked, "What are they shooting?"

"Clay pigeons."

"Birds?" I whispered.

"No, not birds. Round discs made out of clay. I suppose they call them clay pigeons because it makes men feel sportier than shooting at little dishes."

Cars were scrambled throughout the parking lot, pickups nosed into every available corner. Judy cruised past the blacktop and plowed her wheels onto the shoulder of a neighboring vineyard. Stepping out of the car, I sank to my ankles in newly tilled dirt.

As we neared the white cinderblock building, I grabbed Judy's hand and skipped toward the entrance, pumping my knees higher and higher. In front of the door, a thickset man wearing a vest with suede shoulder patches and pockets for bullets stood with his feet spread wide. Judy tucked her narrow chin into her neck and pinned him with a gaze to silence the most unruly student.

"'Scuse me, ma'am. Can I see your membership card?" the beefy man asked.

"We are members of God's Cathedral of the Great Outdoors and have come here to see Mr. Roy Rogers."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. This here's a private club. Members only. Mr. Rogers is competing in a trapshooting competition as a sportsman, not a movie star. I'll have to ask you to leave."

All the skip and jump drained out of me, and I blinked back my tears. Judy was trying to stare down the guard, but he wasn't as easily cowed as a schoolboy. Now I knew what Dad had meant; this was a fool's errand. Slowly, I began trudging away.

"Do you have any idea who I am, Mr. Fletcher?" Judy demanded in her schoolmarm's scold. I spun around. The sentry squinted, as if to bring her into focus.

"No, ma'am, I guess I don't."

"Two years ago your son Junior was in my fourth-grade class, and I expect to teach your younger boy too, assuming he graduates third grade."

"Yes, ma'am. Sorry, Miss Alen, I recognize you now. Still, we got these rules." His overblown baritone was deflating like a punctured tire, and I stifled a whoop of joy. Judy held her tongue, staring him down.

"Well," he relented, stepping aside, "don't say nothin' to nobody."

In the grassy May sun, spectators hugged the shade under spice-scented eucalyptus trees alongside the Kings River. A gauze of yellow smoke hung above the water. Children wore Bermuda shorts, exposing the papery, pre-summer skin of their legs.

"PULL!" a man shouted.

Forty yards away an orange disk sprung into the air; a shooter pulled the trigger, and the clay pigeon split into shards. I heard other muted booms and saw another trap field in the distance, the riflemen small as toy soldiers.

In the nearby range, people had abandoned their folding chairs and were jostling for position behind a rope in the white glare, like spectators waiting for a parade. A few willowy bodies seemed to tower above the rest, but as we walked closer I could see they were boys perched like second heads on their fathers' shoulders. One kid was wearing a red felt cowboy hat like mine.

"There he is!" Judy shouted, pointing to a shooting squad leaving the trap field. "I see Roy Rogers!"

Five men with their rifles pointed at the ground were headed toward the trampled grass at the fringe of the course. Each wore a wide-brimmed hat pulled over his brow.

"Where?" I asked.

"On the end, wearing a cowboy hat."

I squinted into the sun, tenting my eyes with my hands. Three of the men wore Stetsons, and I searched among them for Roy's western shirt with its fringed yoke and pearly snaps, for the jaunty kerchief knotted around his neck and his stenciled cowboy boots. The man Judy had identified as King of the West wore a drooping shell bag strapped around his waist—lumpy, as if it were filled with marbles—and a denim shirt.

"I'm going to get his autograph," Judy announced, foraging in her purse for a pen and paper as she shouldered her way into the crowd.

I wasn't so sure. Four squad-mates stood around the fellow Judy had targeted, corralling him like fence posts. The tallest of them, wearing a red

plaid shirt, leaned closer to the man in the center and whispered something into his ear. When the listener threw back his head and laughed, I finally recognized the narrow eyes and cinema smile of Roy Rogers.

He was smaller than on television and, without his Western gear, looked more like a farmer than a cowboy. In the bright sunshine, he didn't seem as real as the gunslinger riding across my television screen every Saturday morning.

I watched his tall teammate pull two brown bottles from a cooler and pop off their caps with a can opener. The sun prickled my skin as he handed one to my hero. Roy Rogers lifted the bottle to his mouth, tipped back his head and swallowed several gulps. Even from a distance, I recognized the ultramarine medallion of his Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

My stomach churned with disbelief. I wanted to run, but my shoes were rooted in cement. I couldn't look away.

Judy grabbed my arm with enough force to turn me around. Trotting to keep up with her long strides, I followed her away from the field. She stopped and turned so abruptly I stumbled into her back.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Roy Rogers," she shouted in the direction of the crowd. "A lot of children look up to you!"

No one so much as turned a head, and we walked back to her car without a word.

Monday morning, I carried my Roy Rogers lunchbox to school. The cowboy was smiling atop Trigger in living color, same as ever, but my pail dragged as if it were filled with rocks.

When the afternoon school bus dropped me at my rural stop, I dawdled along the road until its yellow backside disappeared into the haze. In the distance I saw the roof of our farmhouse, canopied by umbrella trees and surrounded by vineyards. The silence was heavy; only the grape leaves fussed in the light breeze. Kneeling down, I unlatched my lunchbox and removed its Thermos. I studied the picture wrapped around its perimeter, a miniature of the one on the lid. Trigger was as tiny as a mouse; Roy Rogers' face an eraser smudge.

Jumping to my feet, I hurled my Thermos to the ground. The crash of metal on the sun-baked roadway was as sharp as the report of rifle. Slowly, the chubby cylinder rolled onto the soft dirt and came to rest in a furrow.

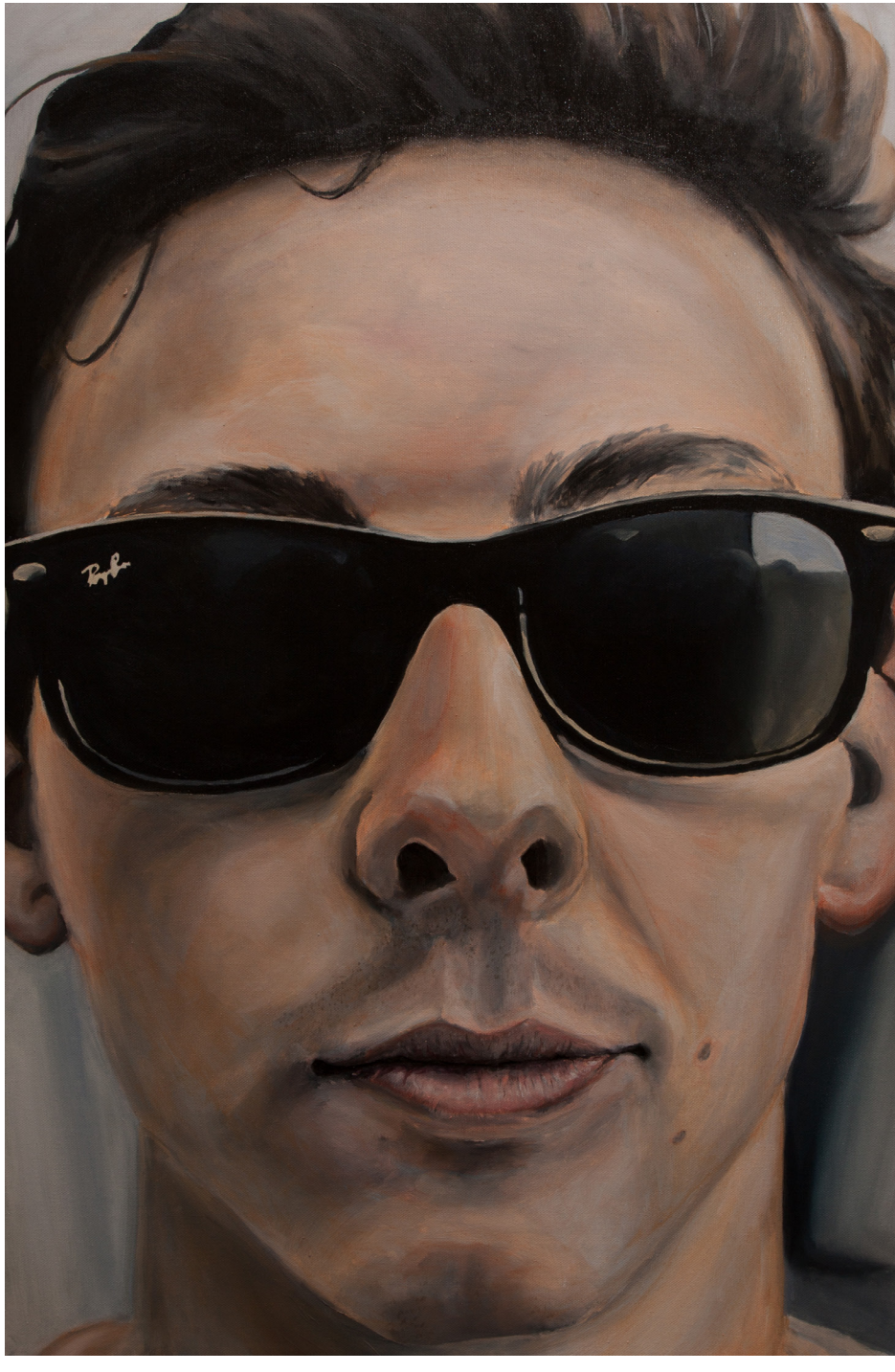
My heart thumping in my throat, I stooped to retrieve it. When I brushed the dust from its sides, I heard the chiming glass of its shattered core.

Fitting the Thermos back into my pail, I clipped the wire holder into place and latched my lunchbox closed. Then I plodded home.

"Oh, no, Janice!" my mother cried when she unscrewed the lid to rinse out the stale milk. "The liner in your thermos is broken. Now we'll have to buy a whole new lunch-bucket."

I was angry and confused. The good guys wore white hats, the bad, black; in my world there were no grays. That man at the Gun Club was an imposter. He couldn't be the brave savior who fired my imagination and galloped through my dreams. One last time I stared at the picture on my lunch pail, trying to coax Roy Rogers back to life. It was useless.

"I don't want another lunchbox," I stammered. "All the grown-up kids bring paper bags."



LUIS

Jack Ready

oil on canvas — 20” by 30”

SANITIZE SONNEILLON

Meghan McDonald

charcoal — 18” by 24”

MOUNTAINS

Christiana Ortiz

digital photography

DARK DAYS TO COME

Michael Pagdon

QUESTIONS OF ABSENCE

What if the child is gone,
no rustle and clump,
no sweep of air as he rushes
past into the back garden?

What if the child is now only
a smoke curl, a sleeve on a coat,
a bruised knee, a rusted box
of white stones, stories?

What if the child is now only
an idea, distorted?
Warmth, cooled?
A swallow, choked?
Breath, breathless?

— *Mercedes Lawry*

WASSERFARBE

Sich die Zeit nehmen
Für diese Fensterläden und ihr Blau,
das abblättert. Sind das nicht vergilbte Fotos
vom zerwühlten Meer, abends, irgendwo
im Süden? Als dir der Wind den Finger
vom Auslöser fegte und mir den Stift aus der Zeile?
Diese Wogen mit ihrer direkten Art, die einleuchtend
wie jeder Heimweg wirkten, doch keinen Halt gaben,
keine Wellenkante für den Blick.

Kein Hotelzimmer,
aber vielleicht auf der Straße die Piniennadeln, ihr dunkler Geruch,
der sich festsetzt an Lungenästen, tiefer als jede Droge.
Sich die Zeit nehmen zum Einschlafen.
Die Zeit für das, was nach dem atemlosen Knistern
Der Schallplatte folgt.

— *Leander Beil*

WATERCOLORS

To take the time
for the window shutters and their blue
that's chipping. Aren't those faded photos
of the churning sea, at evening, somewhere
in the South? When the wind blew your finger
from the trigger and the pencil from my sentence?
In its bold way, the surf appeared clear
like the way home, and yet gave nothing to hold on to,
no wave tail for the view.

No hotel room,
but maybe out on the road the pine needles and their somber scent,
which settle in the lungs, deeper than any drug.
To take the time to fall asleep.
Time for that, which follows after the record's
breathless crackling.

— *translated by Paul-Henri Campbell*

Philip Jason

TRICKLE-DOWN, SECONDHAND FAST FOOD INGESTION

The world, despite its size and diversity, is uniformly a place with a sufficiently healthy appetite. Even a little town, barely worth mentioning, located insignificantly on a continent with habits that would be considered bizarre in more self-righteous places, was determined to possess the capacity to profitably sustain the presence of a fast food franchise on a popular corner of their main road.

The town itself, Atumbo Beardsley (named in part after the white man who, a century ago, decided to name what had existed copacetically without name for a long, long time), was pretty much unknown and surrounded by large amounts of wild grassland where the grass grew in stalks and the lion stalked its prey. Then news spread slowly, and largely by foot, that a fast food franchise was establishing a commercial enterprise in its midst. It would be the first fast food venture in the area, in a part of the world where "the area" generally referred to thousands of square miles, so, while the grass remained wild, the town gained notoriety.

On the day that the restaurant officially opened its doors, all the residents of Atumbo Beardsley who were neither dying nor communicably ill showed up and had their first taste of quickly prepared meat sandwiches and greasy-fried potato-based salt sticks. They washed it all down with large cups full of ice being melted by the presence of artificially colored water containing sugar and bubbles. Afterwards, many people felt some minor digestive discomfort and attendance rose significantly in the bathroom facilities, but by the next day, everyone wanted more, and because that's exactly what the franchise was in the business of providing, all the customers were satisfied.

Rapidly, the fast food provisions of the corner establishment became a part of the Atumbo Beardsley dietary regimen. Day in and day out, the residents ate at least one meal with special sauces and little packets of ketchup, sometimes even two or three such meals, and this made them

happy and also fat. With each burger served, regardless of its proximity to the consumption of an accompanying milkless frozen "shake" product, the average weight of a citizen of Atumbo Beardsley rose and rose.

Eventually, word of this nutritional expansion reached the ears of a roving tribe of hungry cannibals who were facing difficult times. For many years, the members of this tribe had wandered the lands, preying on people in various towns, never able to stay in any one spot for too long without scaring away the food. Recently, this had become a problem for much of the tribe and complaints had been brought to its leader:

"Great Big Eater, it is my duty as your devoted servant to inform you that the people are tired of walking."

"I have heard this, but I do not understand. If we do not walk, we do not eat. That has always been our way."

"Times have changed. The people are not so proud anymore of who they are and the way we have always done things. Some of them have even begun to speak of eating other things that do not require so much wandering. That is how serious their complaints have become."

"Then let us do as we have always done. We will eat the complainers."

"That will not work this time. The complainers outnumber those who would eat them."

"That is serious. I must have time to think."

When rumor of a place occupied by a herd of people who were fat like cows fell upon the leader's ears, he thought that his prayers, made to gods that most people have never heard of, had been answered.

"If the rumors are true," he thought to himself, "this land could provide my people with something to distract them from their grievances for a while."

Taking advantage of whatever time was left during which the tribespeople were willing to move, he led them to the secluded outskirts of Atumbo Beardsley, where they took great care to remain hidden from their potential prey and prepared for several days to strike the town. In that time period, they wove nets and gags and bindings from the sturdy tall grasses that they also used to conceal themselves as they scouted. The initial reports brought back by the scouts seemed to confirm the rumors, and for the first time in a long while, excitement spread through the cannibals, renewing and refreshing the stale connection they had to their traditions.

When the day of the raid finally came, as the sun was setting, the leader stood before his tribe and spoke:

"People of the People Who Eat People, we have been granted a great blessing by our considerate gods. They have brought us here to this land, this town where every person weighs like two people. Tonight we venture into their homes knowing that for our efforts, all the rewards shall be double! It is a bargain that only the gods could have provided for us. Only they could have led us to The Land of Two for the Price of One! Let us go now with our bodies ready and with thanks to those gods in our minds and in our hearts, and together we shall harvest a feast from this place!"

The next day, at the small red tables that were always messy, many people who lived in Atumbo Beardsley sat and ate their egg-patty biscuit-breakfasts with a side slab of potato and grease and talked about the strange disappearances of some of their friends, which they saw as being possibly related to all the late night screaming that had been so difficult to sleep through. There were further discussions over lunch and dinner, and those people who had ordered for a companion in expectation of their arrival for what had become a daily meal-time meeting ritual had twice as much to eat when that companion failed to show up and was later declared missing.

Meanwhile, in the cannibals' secret tent village, the tribe members were commenting on how quickly their new food supply had cooked in the fires and how tasty and delicious it was. After the meal, many people felt slightly ill, and attendance rose significantly in the bushes, but by the next day, everyone wanted more, and so another raid was planned for the following evening.

As the sun set on the new raiding day, the leader spoke again. This time, all he said was, "Let's go get some!"

By the sun's return, the population of Atumbo Beardsley was once again smaller, and of those who remained, few had gotten a good night's sleep. Breakfast was eaten in the usual greasy fashion, and to demonstrate its membership in and concern for the community, the franchise gave everyone free coffee with any purchase and free refills as well.

The cannibals were also sleepy from having been up all night capturing Atumbo Beardsley residents, whose larger caloric assets made them more difficult to transport. Nonetheless, they were prepared to rest comfortably knowing they would dine well and furiously that evening, after the fires

had blazed and done some serious cooking. When that feasting had ended, the tribespeople were again satisfied, and again they wanted more and so a new raid was scheduled and executed and the people of Atumbo Beardsley endured another sleepless night. The cannibal fires burned and the men and women ate the tasty grease of men and women, and this returned them to wanting more and the beginning of what was becoming or had already become a fast food chain cycle.

From this cycle, a seemingly symbiotic way of life emerged for the people in and around Atumbo Beardsley and continued for an extended period of time. Much to the cannibals' surprise, the people of Atumbo Beardsley showed no signs they had any intention of evacuating but were also exhibiting no symptoms of courage. It appeared to the cannibals that while these oddly happy meals were clearly not ignorant of the disappearance of their friends and neighbors, they were also not opposed to the situation. When this had been going on long enough to have reduced the total weight of Atumbo Beardsley to roughly three-quarters of its post-franchise super-size, the most curious of the cannibals decided to question one of the pre-slaughtered captives.

"Oh, we know full well what is going on," the captive said, "but where else are we going to get these golden, delicious fries? And if it were possible to find that sauce just about anywhere, it wouldn't be all that 'special' now would it?"

The cannibal had no idea what the captive was talking about. He attributed her strange ramblings to the fear-induced madness that afflicts much of the food supply before it just shuts up and becomes food. He never thought about it again, except for maybe once, later that night, when he was eating dinner and thought he detected a hint of craziness in the stew.

Now, despite their awareness of the curious nature of the situation, things were, for the most part, excellent for the newly sedentary cannibals, whose feet had never felt more rested. The eating was good, and the chief was pleased by reports indicating the overall level of his popularity was the highest ever recorded. Everyone was happy and those who still had complaints would only voice them with their mouths full in a muffled and messy fashion that no one paid attention to.

Then one day, after this had been going on for quite a while, all the cannibals were fat too, and some of them were starting to feel a little ill. At

first, the flavor rich, quickly prepared food supply worked to keep the people complacent, but when several middle-aged, should-have-been-healthy members of the tribe quite embarrassingly became the first cannibals ever known to die of massive coronary complications, it was time to do something.

"We have our reputations to consider," said the chief. "No one will fear us if they know they can just outrun us to death."

"Does that really matter?" said his advisor. "Our current food supply is slow and lethargic. We could catch them with simple politeness. Please stop. Thank you."

"It does matter. Being a cannibal is about more than just eating other people. It is a commitment to a variety of principles. It's about eating something you can relate to. Somewhere in all of this deliciousness, that's been lost. We no longer understand our food. Maybe we no longer understand ourselves. All we can say for sure is something is wrong and we have to find out what it is. I call for an investigation!"

The best and brightest of the chief's most trusted people were set to the task of studying the problem and finding something appropriate to blame. In their own camp, an attempt was made to gather and collect information about the cannibals' current lifestyle. Unfortunately, the only thing to observe was a bunch of people who spent most of the day lying around, waiting for mealtimes; any effort made to actually question the cannibals was thwarted by short attention spans and a general unwillingness to participate in activity. As one of the researchers noted: "It's amazing there are still people willing to go on night raids into Atumbo Beardsley to procure something to eat, but even there, the usual dedication to the task has been replaced by a 'not it!' system of doing things."

On the Atumbo Beardsley side, cannibals, disguised as not cannibals, mingled with the townspeople to get a better understanding of who they were. It was immediately apparent that much of the Atumbo Beardsley lifestyle revolved around a single grazing station that was open twenty-four hours a day, according to a really excited sign. When the cannibals looked into this more closely, they discovered the strange universe of standardized franchise delicacies, all of which were incredibly unappealing to their highly selective palates, but appeared to be the predominant source of nutrition for the people they'd been eating. It seemed pretty obvious to the investigators that this strange diet was related to whatever was happening to them, and

so they began to study it closely, hoping to determine its impact on the biological systems of the cannibal organism. After collecting as much data as they could and performing some startlingly advanced analysis, they arrived at a number of alarming conclusions.

"Great Big Eater, we have found the problem."

"What is it?"

"It's the people we're eating. They're barely even food."

"How is that possible?"

"Because the food they eat isn't really food either. It's some kind of cooked garbage."

"What exactly is killing our people?"

"It's basically a form of starvation. We're eating a huge amount of absolutely nothing."

"If that's true, the solution is simple. We will move on"

"That's not an option. We're too out of shape."

"What does that mean?"

"If we try to move, we'll either die or make excuses."

"Then what can we do?"

"We must innovate!"

Several days later, the Surgeon General of the cannibals, who, in more primitive times (before the influence of television, which the cannibals received via satellite dish and a 32-inch flat panel screen recently brought back during one of the raids), would have been known as a witch doctor, issued an emergency mandate, approved by the chief, stating that all meat abducted from Atumbo Beardsley must come with the following warning:

> Studies Have Shown that Trickle-Down, Secondhand
> Fast Food Ingestion Can Be Harmful to Your Health.

The warning was printed on T-shirts which were distributed to all newly arriving members of the food supply, and tribal meetings were called in which the results of the investigation were explained to everyone in order to boost the general public's awareness of the problem. While hopes were high that this strategy would be effective in preserving the cannibal way of life, the reality was that it was too late; their lifestyle had already been severely compromised and it was only a matter of time before their cannibal hearts failed entirely.

Zach Milkis

THE AUTOCRITIQUE

The door to the studio apartment slams shut. The Critic blinks, issues a short sigh, and before long falls back into quiet meditation. He inhales deeply the rich melody of black coffee as it dances seamlessly with the crisp, meticulous voice of Miles Davis's trumpet, calling softly but distinctly from the turntable. Exhaling, he basks in the nebulous blue haze between contemplative piano musings and cerebral woodwind monologues. Tibetan singing bowls, Ivy League degrees, Dostoyevsky hardbacks, and African tribal masks peer back with clear eyes at the Critic from within the languid cloud. He turns away from the Fender Rhodes piano sitting quietly in the corner, keys obscured by a half-inch of dust, and crosses his arms once more to the barren pages in his vintage Smith-Corona typewriter.

▪ ▪ ▪

I engage only in occasional correspondence with the Critic now. I grew weary of his incessant condescension, his pedantic conceit. The vignette about my first kiss and the poem about my parents' divorce were each met with excessive derision. My ruminations on love and vulnerability he deemed "overindulgent and otherwise utterly unpalatable." I sent him a short story loosely concerning the meta-desultory, neo-transcendental connotations of unempirical self-loathing. He loved that one. As I hone my craft and explore new ways to tell my story, growing bolder and more honest with every line, he has only grown more distant. I like to think he has given up on trying to win me back.

Sometimes I envision him as a crab in a three-piece suit – scuttling about frantically on tiny, brittle legs designed for the explicit purpose of shuttling his enormous head from one place to the next, gibberish billowing in bubbles from his open mouth. He continues to sputter and gurgle desperately but his words are frothy and unintelligible. Other times I just feel sorry for him.

▪ ▪ ▪

A black shadow creeps into the reflection of the stainless steel French press, and emits a thoughtful mew. The Critic is broken from his reverie, and turns toward the shadow. "Yes Dylan, I know," he whispers to the cat. "She's gone. It's just me and you again my friend." Dylan shrugs his shoulders from beneath a shroud of black fur and licks his paws knowingly. On the days when the Critic felt his most cerebral, his most analytical, the cat's full name was Bob Dylan. On the days when the Critic felt his most emotional, most at odds with himself, the cat's full name was Dylan Thomas. Today the Critic addresses his feline confidante as Dylan Thomas.

He opens a can of tuna for the cat, and a bottle of merlot for himself. The wine settles torpidly at the bottom of his glass, vibrant red turbulence giving way once more to weary burgundy complacency. But a particle of something effervescent, insuppressible, lingers in the glass; the Critic sips it, massages its energy against his tongue, and drinks it down. Dylan chews his tuna thoughtfully.

▪ ▪ ▪

A short while ago the Critic contacted me. Along with his standard offering of hyper-intellectualized analysis and contemptuous critiques, he mentioned casually that he intended to try his hand at composition. He did this almost timidly: a characteristic I have never associated with the Critic. And while the Critic could in a second generate a highbrow cerebral examination of the philosophical merit of a toenail, he has never, to my knowledge, actually written anything even remotely creative or emotive in any way. I was rather taken aback. "Your voice is you," I told him. "Don't be afraid to explore it. Be raw. Be real." I can't help but think this will be an impossible task for the Critic. Then again, I overcame his mechanical censorship to begin these baby steps towards authenticity. Perhaps even the Critic himself is capable of the same.

▪ ▪ ▪

He sits there quietly, sipping his wine, the dissipating echo of stiff stiletto footsteps still resonating in his mind. He laments his invariable failure to articulate his feelings to her. He laments his incessant inability to articulate his feelings to himself. For so long the emotional truth has lay cosseted under the opaque armor of analytical denigration, safely buried beneath layers of hyper-rational vilification. Now, with every frightening,

liberating breath, he can feel it bubbling to the surface. The Fender Rhodes and Smith-Corona stare straight into his soul.

Miles Davis calls from the depths of the blue haze, his refrains piercing like brass bullets, his voice that of crystalline truth. The Critic is floored by its honesty. John Coltrane's saxophone is a swirling silo of melody stretching to the heavens, a passionate poem of the heart: transparent, transcendent, alive, and sincere. Then, suddenly, the Critic begins to bleed. Blemished and beautiful, life stretches from his fingertips onto the keys of his typewriter; seeds of crimson ink blossom into radiant red flowers on the page—bare, bold, and brilliant. For the first time in his life, the Critic does not think. He lets emotion flow forth unadulterated and unhindered. He surrenders completely, telling the whole truth and singing all the way. Dylan purrs supportively from his sun-soaked perch beneath the open window.

SELF PORTRAIT

Courtney Griffith

oil on canvas

UNTITLED

Parisa Tajalli

gel medium transfer — 8” by 10”

UNTITLED

Parisa Tajalli

silver gelatin print — 11” by 14”

HANDS

Kate Lassalle-Klein

chalk pastel — 14.5” by 11.5”

MARE NOSTRUM

The sun still rises from the Dardanelles,
draws an arc to Africa
and sets upon the Pillars of Hercules,
while the eagle has ceased to sweep the surge,
does not fly from end to end anymore.

Sunken down the shoals
off the French Riviera,
hulks of warships act as treasure chests
to the thrill of blue-eyed divers
from outside the acknowledged world.

Someplace around Byzantium,
forlorn in the dark of a crypt
under layers of later erections,
the gold insignia Odoacer shipped to Zeno
await retrieval and upholding.

Looked after by zealous Italic sitters,
ebony-skinned children
of well-to-do Germanic families
gather colored pebbles on the shingles
of Capri's exclusive inlets.

On the sand of deserted beaches
along the Gulf of Taranto,
captive in the spirals of fossilized shells,
the trumpet of Hannibal's exhausted elephants
reechoes through the millennia.

— *Alessio Zanelli*

John Gifford

A HAND

We didn't have much warning. The chime sounded only moments before we felt the first jolt, and immediately afterward, one of the flight attendants got on the intercom system and ordered everyone to return to their seats and fasten their seatbelts. I sat up straight, my hands gripping the armrests, my eyes darting from the glowing "Fasten Seatbelt" light to the passengers scrambling up and down the aisle, leaning, stumbling, clinging to seats as if walking into a hurricane. An infrequent and reluctant flyer, I took my cues from their contorted faces, their expressions of amusement, irritation, surprise, worry. How was I to react? Were plane rides always this bumpy? Were we safe? And how was I going to pass the next hour or more until we landed?

Another jolt preceded several seconds of what felt like rigid jackhammering. As it continued, there were sounds of hard objects colliding in the belly of the airplane, sounds of luggage shifting and sliding in the overhead bins. There was the feeling that the plane was striking something solid, the way a boat hull slaps against heavy seas, sudden and hard, causing you to wonder about its durability, about the people who built it, about their training, their states of mind the day, the week, the month, the year they spent assembling it. Is the vessel, or in this case, the airplane, going to hold up? That's what you want to know. That's what I wanted to know.

I was wedged into the tiny seat, my knees providing lumbar support for the passenger in front of me, pressing myself against my own seatback. Feeling the blunt force of every jolt reverberating throughout the plane, up into the cabin, rattling my fiddle-string-taut muscles, I closed my eyes and wished for another Bloody Mary.

Pilots have their pre-flight checklists, and so do I. While I imagine their lists are detailed and extensive, pages of technical terms followed by blank spaces in which to note pressures and weights and other readings, mine is very simple: have a Blood Mary. Or several of them. It's the only sustainable way I've found to deal with the trauma of flying. I tried Xanax once and it

was wonderful. It was like drinking seven Bloody Marys, without the headache or dehydration the following morning. I didn't care about anything, much less a bumpy plane ride. The problem was, I also didn't care about the business meeting I attended that afternoon, or the part of the project for which I was responsible, or even how my peers felt about my work. This psychotropic foray didn't last long before I returned to Bloody Marys, which I've found to be a reasonable compromise when traveling by air.

I wished for another tall one right then, for the fuzzy-headed haze they'd loaned me had now worn off, and I could feel the adrenaline surging through my body, through my arms and down into my hands, which were still gripping the armrests, the white spots on my knuckles like pressure readings of their own, indicating I could go just a smidge tighter, but not much more. Sitting in the aisle seat, I looked around at some of the other passengers who were reading newspapers or holding conversations, as if turbulence were a routine and uneventful part of air travel, as if they were indifferent to rough plane rides. Maybe it was. Maybe they were. But not me. I didn't fly unless I had to. Headed now to a meeting in Arizona, a trip that would have taken me two days to drive, one way, from my home in Texas, I absolutely had to. There was no other way to get here on time. What a shame, I thought. You can experience so much more when you go by car.

Of course, I couldn't show any of this trepidation because I was sitting beside a girl. A pretty girl. A California girl who was returning home after visiting her grandmother on the East Coast. She looked about twenty, or twenty-two, about my age, and, like me, she wore no wedding ring on her finger. I had said hello to her at boarding and tried to make chitchat on a couple of occasions, but these mini-conversations seemed to fizzle and dissipate like faulty fireworks before they could ever get started. Consequently, we spent most the plane ride up to that point in silence. She seemed a bit aloof, or maybe this was just my imagination. She lived in Los Angeles, after all. I pictured palm-tree-lined beaches; boardwalks crowded with joggers, tourists, girls in roller skates and bikinis; and of course that iconic Hollywood sign. As she sat there flipping through her magazine, her legs crossed, a dainty sandal dangling from her pedicured foot, I wondered how she could be so cool during such a bumpy flight. Was she an actress?

The turbulence was more or less continuous now and the flight attendants were no longer moving up and down the aisle, which meant that I wasn't going to get another Bloody Mary, at least until we landed. Every-

one was seated. And while there seemed to be an air of expectancy—from thoughts of arrival? Of the possibility that the captain might, at any moment, announce that we'd made it through, that he expected the remainder of the flight to be smooth? That the flight attendants would soon be coming through the cabin to offer us coffee, tea, or something stronger?—everyone seemed calm. Except me. My heart was racing. My hands were sweaty. Tapping my feet or bouncing my knee didn't help. I could still feel the turbulence rattling the airplane, pushing the nose askew, throwing us off our bearing. Between these rough patches I thought I could feel the pilot adjusting course, like a sailor tacking his vessel into the wind.

Looking back, this was really no different than me driving my pickup down a country road, my hand on the wheel, steering, fighting the wind, trying to keep it on the blacktop and out of the ditch. The problem was one of control. As a passenger, I had none. And for a Texan, this is a hard thing to accept.

I was still thinking about that last Bloody Mary back in Houston, tasting its peppery bite on my tongue, feeling the chill in my throat as I swallowed, hearing the ice cubes clinking in my glass, when the plane began falling suddenly, as if we'd entered some strange new dimension, a vertical column of hyper-gravity. There was a collective gasp in the cabin, followed by a hush as I waited, waited, wondering if this was really happening. Then, at some point, I recognized the situation as reality, that, yes, we were falling through the sky. I felt green as my stomach came up into my throat, like it does whenever I ride roller coasters. I clung to the armrests, wondering why I hadn't just taken a Xanax.

And then I heard her.

As she squirmed in her seat, the California girl let out a whimper. I wondered for a moment if it was because she'd dropped her magazine. I couldn't have retrieved it for her without placing myself squarely in her lap, but the thought crossed my mind. I was about to say something when I realized she was having as tough a time as I was. The only thing I could think to do was to let her have the armrest between us. So I did and she latched on, her arms stiff as starched denim. Now she was silent and staring straight ahead. Seeing her like this did nothing to assuage my fear, though her reaction provided some small reassurance that my own feelings about air travel weren't unfounded. Still, I thought to myself, what does being right about something matter if you're dead?

Now everyone was silent. Conversations ceased. Not even a newspaper crumpled. I think the California girl held her breath as we plummeted. I know I did. We must have fallen like this for several seconds, though it seemed like a minute. Then, at some point, the plane slammed into the hard bottom of the air pocket—that's what the other passengers were saying afterwards, that we'd hit an air pocket. Well, it was some air pocket. Felt like the ground to me—and there was a sudden jolt, a rigid shockwave as the plane ended its free-fall and resumed forward motion. Now I wondered about the stress tolerances of aircraft aluminum. Of the rivets they use to assemble these planes. Had they imagined such an event when they designed and built this plane? Were they up to date on their eye examinations? Were their rivet guns oiled and in good working order? Had the quality-control inspectors examined every single rivet prior to stamping this bird airworthy?

With the turbulence continuing as before, the California girl sighed painfully and then, to my utter surprise, emitted some kind of mewling sound that reminded me of a little lost kitten. I think this is what got my attention, as I'm an animal lover. I'm nuts about cats!

Regardless, and for reasons I don't fully understand, even today, I did something that would suggest I often endured such lousy airplane rides, something that would suggest I had, in my closet at home, hangers and hangers of slacks bearing stains of long-forgotten Blood Marys juggled and spilled as a result of bumpy plane rides, something that would suggest that I knew, from experience, that turbulence like this was only a temporary inconvenience: I offered her my hand.

She immediately latched on and I could feel her warm palm throbbing against mine, our fingers interlocked, me and the California girl, the heat of youth and fear colliding, our destinies for the time one and the same. During one particularly bumpy stretch she pulled our locked hands in close to her stomach and covered them with her free arm. I could feel her lean body shaking.

This closing of the gulf between us was surreal, for it seemed we were suddenly, somehow, old friends who might look back on this someday and laugh, that we'd both have a story to tell, the same story! While one part of me was cursing the turbulence, another part was instantly smitten with a mode of travel that could provide the circumstance to turn indifferent strangers into instant friends. I couldn't get over how close I now felt to this girl, how comfortable I was here with her, despite the bumpy flight. We

were sharing an adverse experience together, which seemed, strangely, cause for celebration. Moments of our lives that we'd never get back, swapped now for exposure and, in my case, sudden and unexpected composure. Gone was her flight face, her cool demeanor from earlier in the trip, replaced now with her true essence, her persona revealed. Would the real California girl please step forward? Nevermind, she was already here, practically sitting in my lap, a formerly independent entity, now connected to me in a symbiotic grip as we jostled in our seats, in alarm, in terror, but deriving solace from one another.

Her deteriorating state, her acute need, and my apparent ability to provide immediate, if limited, succor, seemed to empower me to remain calm and composed, to think not so much about myself, but about us and our inevitably wedded destiny, which was due to terminate, according to my watch, in less than half an hour.

We didn't talk much as the plane tossed about, dropping suddenly here and there, rattling, vibrating, protesting the unstable air, but communicated to each other nevertheless through our body language, our posture, her whimpering, and my silence, as we remained hand-in-hand until gradually the turbulence abated and the airplane began its slow descent and the flight attendant, now standing at the front of the plane, spoke what are to me the most welcome words of any flight: please prepare for landing.

Watching the flight attendant, calm and composed in her blue suit, watching the other passengers chit-chatting and reading their newspapers in the glow of their own private overhead lights, and thinking about what we'd just gone through, me and the California girl and the entire plane, and not quite certain that it was all over, but hoping, hoping, I realized now we were all actors. Every one of us on that plane.

And as we descended, landed, and taxied to the gate, as we talked about our lives, our jobs, our families, I racked my brain, thinking "what if?" while wondering if she was thinking the same thing. But whatever could happen between us now, and forever afterwards, seemed somehow anticlimactic compared with what we'd just gone through. Had we not just endured our finest hour together? I have no explanation how or why it happened like that; it just did and I didn't think I could live up to it again. I think she knew this. Besides, it could never have worked. Even without the half-continent's distance that separated us, she was a California girl. As for me: there wasn't a six-mule team around that could pull me out of Texas.

I don't remember much about our parting, other than the hug she gave me, and some softly spoken words of gratitude as I stood to get off the plane in Phoenix. We must have traded addresses because that December, and for a few years thereafter, I received a Christmas card from her in the mail. That was twenty-five years ago, when I was still young, when flying was, to me, still something new and exotic. And while I can still see her face in my mind, can still see her look of relief when we landed that day in 1989, I'm sorry to say that I no longer remember her name. But I remember how it felt as I walked off the plane that day, how it felt to receive her cards in the mail, and to know I had a friend in Los Angeles, where I'd never even visited.

A NUDE CHALLENGES THE ARTIST

Don't use your old brush.
Find me in all the edges
of your palette knives.

I'll gleam dark as clay, loam, blood,
a relief map for the blind.

— *Robert Pesich*

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Alan Albert's work has appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Poetry East*, *Southwest Review*, *Cortland Review*, and many other journals. Albert works as a clinical psychologist with individuals and couples in private practice in Newton, Massachusetts.

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As owner of the Santa Clara-based Studio-Bongiorno, **Phil Bongiorno**'s work exemplifies the gallery's "embracing the light and dark within us all" mentality. His art, a combination of painting, mixed media and photography, captures the rich emotion found throughout the journey we call life.

Paul-Henri Campbell was born 1982 in Boston, Massachusetts. He is a bilingual poet of German and English. He studied Catholic theology and classical Greek at the National University of Ireland and the Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main. *duktus operandi* (2010) was his first book of poems, followed by *Space Race* in 2012. In November 2013, a third volume of poems titled *Am Ende der Zeilen* will be in print.

Max Evans: How am I writing? (Writer ID: wrigley55555@aol.com). "Pops' Ribs" is the lead story to the collection *Where's Pops?* coming out in 2014.

Carolyn Forché is the author of four books of poetry and the editor of two anthologies, most recently *The Poetry of Witness: The Tradition in English, 1500–2001*, forthcoming from W.W. Norton & Co. in late January, 2015. She is Professor of English at Georgetown University, where she also directs The Lannan Center for Poetics and Social Progress.

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Cristiana Ortiz, a finance major at Santa Clara University, is from Denver, Colorado, but has been fortunate enough to live in London and travel extensively with her family over the years. She wants to visually show the world through her eyes and what she interprets as beautiful and a camera only helps her vision become clearer. She is self-taught and takes pictures for SCU as a freelance photographer.

Robert Pesich is the president of Poetry Center San José, coordinator of The Well-RED Reading Series, editor and publisher for Swan Scythe Press, recipient of a poetry fellowship from Arts Council Silicon Valley, and twice a Djerassi Resident Artist.

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Jennifer Raha recently graduated from University of North Carolina Greensboro's MFA program. Her poems have been published in the *WomenArts Quarterly Journal*, *DASH*, and other publications. Jennifer currently teaches at Old Dominion University in Virginia.

Quinn Ramsay is a recent graduate of Pacific University and an Oregonian by birth and nature. "Three Women I Wish I'd Met in Edinburgh, and a Fourth That I Actually Did" is his first published piece.

Jack Ready is from San Diego, California, and grew up spending time at the beach and surfing. He has been painting and drawing his whole life and hopes to pursue a career in art after college.

Parisa Tajalli grew up in a lazy river town in Central Texas and came to Santa Clara University to study chemistry. After graduation she plans to spend a gap year backpacking and getting a little more acquainted with the world before beginning graduate school.

Janice Westerling is a San Francisco Bay Area writer whose essays draw on the pocket-sized farms of her Central Valley childhood. Her work has been published in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Coachella Review*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

Alessio Zanelli, Italian, writes poetry in English. His work has appeared in magazines from twelve countries, including the USA: *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Italian Americana*, *The Lyric*, *Potomac Review*, *The Worcester Review* and *World Literature Today*. His latest collection, *Over Misty Plains*, was published in 2012 by Indigo Dreams.

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FEATURING POETRY BY **CAROLYN FORCHÉ**

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